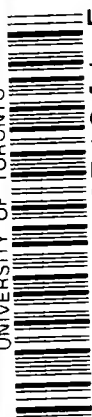


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THE SKEPTICS
OF THE FRENCH RENAISSANCE

UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME.

THE SKEPTICS OF THE ITALIAN
RENAISSANCE. By JOHN OWEN.

THE CIVILIZATION OF THE RE-
NAISSANCE IN ITALY. By Dr.
JACOB BURCKHARDT. Translated by
S. G. C. MIDDLEMORE.

LONDON: SWAN SONNENSCHN & CO.
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THE SKEPTICS
OF THE
FRENCH RENAISSANCE

BY

JOHN OWEN

RECTOR OF EAST ANSTEY, DEVON

Author of "Evenings with the Skeptics"; "Verse Musings on Nature, Faith and Freedom"; Editor of Glanvil's "Scepsis Scientifica"



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INTRODUCTION.

LITTLE need be added here to the Introductory remarks made in my companion volume on the Italian Skeptics. In this, as in the preceding volume, the interlocutors are the same, the intellectual and spiritual idiosyncrasies with which they are hypothetically credited are alike, the mode of treatment and other such literary attributes are more or less akin. A parallelism incidental and unconscious seems to characterize the two volumes. How far indeed it might be possible on some such plan as Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* to attempt a comparison of likeness or contrast between some of the chief personages in both volumes is a suggestion to which the truest response would be affirmative though its working out in detail would probably be attended with risk. Thus Dante and Pascal might be made to pair off as possessing some features and tendencies strikingly alike. Similarly Pulci and Montaigne, Pomponazzi and Sanchez might be coupled and induced without much difficulty to go in intellectual double harness, just as, later on, we have, outside the scope of our immediate enquiry, such later parallelisms as those between Gioberti and Malebranche, and Rosmini and Maine de Biran. But the attempt, however easy in many respects, would not be altogether void of hazard, while its utility, except as an idle man's recreation, would be as manifest here as it is in most of Plutarch's variously assorted literary matches.

What seems more certain as well as more useful in a comparative retrospect of the two volumes is their aggregate lessons or issues; chiefest of these is the fact that the general scope of the earlier volume, and the free-thinking skeptics irregularly embraced by it, tends to the impairing, if not to the exhaustion, of Italian skepticism regarded as an evolutionary process. With the death of Vanini the history of skeptical free-thought in Italy seems to come to an end. The 'Catholic Reaction,' as the movement has, with doubtful appropriateness, been described, had already set in. Popes and Church Councils on the one hand, the courts of princes, the recently awakened splendour of the nobility of France and Italy on the other; the æsthetic culture of academies and learned societies throughout Europe,—all these were causes which drew after them divers effects in harmony with the divine environments in which they operated. While in Italy they combined partly to dwindle, partly to confine to a narrower grove the outspoken skepticism of *e.g.* such thinkers as Pomponazzi and Vanini, in France their operation partook of a broader, more expansive, more heterogeneous character. Thus Italy, which had been the foremost to occupy the field of the European Renaissance in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, resigns in the latter half of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries its supremacy to France. The skepticism which, with Giordano Bruno as its prophet, it had diffused over Europe became more and more idealistic in its character. So much was this the case that it accomplished, so to speak, the complete circle of physical and metaphysical research and again became dogmatic and doctrinaire. It is curious and anomalous, but it is nevertheless true, that Gioberti and Rosmini are the intellectual and spiritual sons of Giordano Bruno; at least they are his step-children, the offspring of one true, one supposititious parent.

The natural outcome of this philosophical genealogy is manifold. Not only have the professorial chairs in the Italian

Universities during the seventeenth century been filled by Hegelians, but the free-thought that starts from the Renaissance has produced outcomes no less remarkable in other directions of culture and enlightenment. Thus the naturalism of *e.g.* such writers as Marino has frequently tended to dogmatic negation, while this in its turn, as in the case of Leopardi, has degenerated into extreme pessimism. But the evolution in these and in similar cases has taken place on the straight lines of philosophical continuity and sequence. In a word, the skepticism of the Italian Renaissance has either become merged and extinguished by ecclesiastical dogma, or else, taking another and opposite direction, it has committed intellectual suicide by sacrificing itself on the altar of intellectual Nihilism and Negation.

In France, on the contrary, as already pointed out, the philosophy of skepticism and free enquiry takes a much wider range of culture. Not however that this implies an inferiority in other departments of philosophical and scientific research, if at least we except the slight superiority in æsthetic and artistic productions which seems implied by the names of Jean Cousin, Palissy, Vouet, Le Brun and Poussin. Were we to take a crucial instance of the comparative culture of the two countries and their parallelism in progressive knowledge, we might perhaps pair off the mathematical school of Ramus against that of Galileo and his disciples. During the seventeenth century, stimulated no doubt by the marvellous and then recent discoveries in astronomy, no study was more fashionable even in royal circles than that of mathematics. The chairs occupied by its professors were invested with greater splendour than other professorial chairs, 'd' autant,' as we are told, 'que les mathématiques sont sciences royales et de tous temps estimées très belles et très nécessaires.' Though the difference might not have been great, the successors in Ramus's mathematical chair, including such famous names as Henri de Monantheuil, Viete Jacques Martin, Jean

Baptiste Morin, Gilles de Roberval, Jean Stilla, and Pierre Gassendi, were superior to those who followed in the steps and propagated the teaching of Galileo Galilei. We must regard as part of this larger learning in mathematics and physical science, the greater amplitude and diversity of skeptical free-thought which we have already asserted to characterize French philosophy. The bearing of this point on the subject-matter of the present volume is that which its readers ought especially to bear in mind.

Thus in the plan of selection herein adopted, which was also the plan of the former volume, the thinkers chosen are types. They do not represent an unbroken continuity of thought, nor a close chronological sequence in point of time. Intellectual principles, standpoints or directions involving unity or similarity such as might afford a basis for classification, may exist in various kinds. These mere tendencies may stand in relation to the persons who embody and represent them like a string on which is threaded a number of beads. The thread of silk, or cotton, or wire, bears no more vital or essential relation to the beads thereby held together than, let us say, the Linnæan principle of plant-classification by external structure bears to the vital attributes or true *natural* character of the plants thus discriminated.

Thus under the general principle of free scientific enquiry—a principle uncommitted to any particular method or conclusion—we may have a skepticism wholly free from both affirmation or negation—in other words, pure Pyrrhonism; or we may have a skepticism which is adopted in order to obtain a ground or foothold for some dogmatic principle—the methodical principle which is known in philosophy as academic skepticism. We might, on sufficient grounds given, have adopted this discrimination in the former volume. Thus no attentive reader could have failed to note the essential difference between, let us say, Pulci, Machiavelli and Vanini on the one hand, and Dante, Petrarca and Bruno on the other.

Readers little versed in philosophical thought might have assigned to the former a kind of philosophical unscrupulousness, a liberty degenerating into libertinism; in other words, they might have accused them of perversities of ratiocination which are impossible both in idea and actuality, forgetting that a principle of thought such as *e.g.* the *pure enquiry for truth*, especially for *truth that is absolute*, may easily exist without any definite conclusion or kind of method.

A similar discrimination may obtain in the case of French skeptical thinkers, and a consideration of the names pertaining to academic and Pyrrhonic skepticism will furnish a proof of the impartiality with which the names in the following volume have been selected. Happily for our purpose, the greater wealth of French philosophic thought in thinkers of both kinds will render the comparison between them more demonstrable as well as variedly interesting. We thus have a kind of dual continuity of French free philosophy.

I.

Pyrrhonic Skeptics.

Montaigne.

Rabelais.

*Charron.**Sanchez.**Pascal.**Le Vayer.*

Rousseau.

II.

Academic Skeptics.

Descartes.

*Peter Ramus.**Pascal.*

Malebranche.

Huet of Avranches.

Bayle.

D'Alembert.

Voltaire.

It is not contended that these lists are faultless, or that a name assigned to one might have equal right to be assigned to the other. The qualities for which they stand are rather approximately than distinctly separable. They are in one case more or less Pyrrhonic, or more Pyrrhonic than academic, or again more academic than Pyrrhonic. Pascal, to take a remarkable example, occupies a place in each list. It would

certainly not be easy to say on a full and impartial examination of the question whether his was more a Pyrrhonic or an academic skepticism. There was a time in his life when he was entirely and exclusively the former, but there was another period when he was wholly the latter. Le Vayer, on the other hand, started with being an academic skeptic, but the close of his philosophical career presents him as wholly a Pyrrhonian. In short, the two methods of skeptical thought are so closely akin, the line which separates the academic from the Pyrrhonic thinker is either so faint and imperceptible, or else is so wavy and uncertain, that it seems impossible to obtain a clear indication of its position.

Readers of these lists will probably feel some surprise at what may be termed, especially by way of contrast with Italian philosophers, the greater affluence of French free-thinkers. Almost every thinker of importance in French philosophy during the seventeenth century may claim to be more or less of a skeptic or free-thinker. There are of course reasons why the germ of free culture should have produced such a diversity of mature fruitage in French thought, why Montaigne, Charron and Rabelais stretch hands of brotherhood and philosophical reciprocity across the intervening centuries to the Encyclopædists, to Rousseau, D'Alembert, Diderot and Voltaire in the eighteenth century, but these reasons we have no room or time at present to explore. Some of them are political and economical, others are ecclesiastical and religious; all of them are so indissolubly connected with the history of France that to attempt a bare enumeration of them would involve the writing of French history during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Lastly. It is the author's pleasant duty again to proffer his thanks to Mr. Wm. Swan Sonnenschein for the continuation of those invaluable indices with which he most kindly enriched the earlier volume. Those who are acquainted with the fullness, the learning, the literary and other interests, the varied

utility of those judicious additamenta to that volume, will be the first to concede how much they deserve the acknowledgment and gratitude both of author and reader.

JOHN OWEN.

EAST ANSTEY RECTORY,

October 24th, 1893.

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THE SKEPTICS OF THE FRENCH
RENAISSANCE.

'Si philosopher c'est douter, comme ils disent, à plus forte raison niaiser et fantastiquer, comme je fois, doit estre douter.'

Montaigne, *Essais*, bk. ii. ch. iii.

'But if he should still remain in doubt, where is the harm, or rather why is it not to be considered a good? The subject is evidently one which admits strong probabilities on opposite sides. Doubt therefore is the proper sentiment for the occasion.'

S. Bailey, *Essay on Pursuit of Truth*, p. 42.

'J'appelle Montaigne "le Français le plus sage qui ait jamais existé."'

Sainte Beuve, *Nouveaux Lundis*, ii. p. 177.

CHAPTERS I.-II.

MONTAIGNE.

MRS. HARRINGTON. As successive exponents of Free-thought we ought perhaps to have made Montaigne¹ follow Raymund of Sabieude,² who, we must presume, was his master.

TREVOR. In my opinion this was quite unnecessary. The influence the Spanish professor exercised on Montaigne, though distinct in quality, was not overwhelmingly great in quantity. His native independence and intellectual vigour made the

¹ On the subject of Montaigne, the following are the authorities consulted and cited:—

Essais de Michel de Montaigne avec des Notes de Tous les Commentateurs. Paris, Didot, 1838. With this ordinary text has been collated those of other Editions; notably the reprint of the *first* Edition: Paris 1870.

For the use of English readers references are also made to Hazlitt's improved version of Cotton's translation. London: J. Templemann, 1842.

La Theologie Naturelle de Raymond Sebon, Traduit par Messire Michel Seigneur de Montaigne. Paris 1581.

Lettres inedites de Michel Montaigne et de quelques autres personnages du 16^e siècle, par M. Feuillet de Conches, 1863.

Nouveaux Documents inedits ou peu connus sur Montaigne, par Dr. J. F. Payen. Par. 1850.

Recherches sur Montaigne, par Dr. J. F. Payen.

Le Christianisme de Montaigne, par l'Abbé Labourderie.

Grün, *La Vie Publique de Montaigne*. Paris 1855.

Bayle St. John, *Montaigne the Essayist*. 2 vols. London 1857.

Eloge Historique de Michel de Montaigne, par D. Devienne, 1775.

Michel de Montaigne, son origin, sa famille, etc., par Theophile Malvezin. Bordeaux 1875.

Étude sur les Essais de Montaigne, par Alphonse Leveaux. Paris 1870.

M. Ste Beuve, *Nouveaux Lundis*, ii. p. 450, vi. p. 239; *Causeries du Lundi*, iv. 76.

Nisard, *Histoire de la Litterature Français*. Vol. i.

Dr. Hermann Thimm, *Der Skepticismus Montaigne's*. Göttingen 1875.

Of Articles in Dictionaries, the only one deserving mention is M. Joubert in the *Nouv. Bio. Gen.* Of Articles in English Reviews and Magazines it seems impossible for English critics to avoid notice of Dean Church's celebrated Essay, contributed to the *Oxford Essays* for 1857. Notwithstanding the excessive laudation bestowed on this production, and its unquestionable merits in several important particulars, the Essay is wholly vitiated by its untenable stand-points. To estimate a Free-thinker of the Renaissance, by the prim, gravely pedantic, and hyper-decorous standard of a typical Oxford Don, and a born Ecclesiastic, is a twofold mistake which is hard to understand in a critic possessed of the barest rudiments of literary knowledge and justice.

² Comp. *Evenings with the Skeptics*, vol. ii. p. 423.

rôle of disciple to Raymund or any one else quite impossible. Hence French skepticism, fully formed in the sense of Pyrrhonic suspense, begins with Montaigne. He is the Sokrates of French philosophy; wielding the same instrumentality of inquisitive Nescience as the famous Greek, and differing from him only in his greater lack of earnestness. His *Essais*, too, occupy just the same place in French Free-thought, that the Platonic dialogues of Search occupy in Greek philosophy. . . .

HARRINGTON. The *Essais* fully deserves both its classic position and its general influence, for a more delightful book it would be impossible to name. If a book is the reflex of the author's mind and nature; and in Montaigne's case it must have been so, for he tells us 'his book is himself,' what a pleasant, thoughtful, chatty, good-humoured old gentleman he must have been! a perfect model in my opinion of that rarest of combinations, learning and philosophical culture, with homely common sense and genuine *bon-homie*. The only fault I find in him is that with which he is usually charged,—he parades too fully and freely what he conceives to be his own eccentricities, taking a half-humorous pleasure in making himself out more weak, capricious, ignorant, foolish and forgetful than he really was.

MISS LEYCESTER. May not this well-marked characteristic help to explain what we call his skepticism? He may have taken a pleasure in minimizing his knowledge and magnifying his ignorance for the same reason that he exaggerates his weaknesses and throws a veil over his virtues. I have sometimes thought this is a kind of trick of our skeptics, just as some valetudinarians take a morbid delight in dilating on their symptoms, or perhaps as beggars show their sores to elicit sympathy and charity.

TREVOR. Rather say, Miss Leycester, for the reason that beggars are beggars—an overt proof that they possess *nothing*, and are not ashamed to own it. That a skeptic should claim the name and the intellectual indigence which it implies, and notwithstanding, make an open boast of his knowledge, would be an incongruity too flagrant and self-stultifying to be common.

ARUNDEL. And yet an exaggerated estimate, combined with a needless parade, of one's own ignorance, may surely be just

as far from the truth as an unreal and ostentatious display of knowledge. The besetting sin of skepticism, I should say, is pretentious ignorance—a false and affected agnosticism. This is one reason which makes me distrust the sincerity of over-much skeptical profession. In this respect I agree with Miss Leycester ; as a rule

‘Methinks our skeptics do protest too much.’

Were they more silent, I should give them more credence.

HARRINGTON. You do Montaigne, at all events, injustice in this particular. His extreme garrulity is not the quality only of his belief or unbelief ; it is part of the man himself—a characteristic of his effusive temperament. Reticence on any subject was not only distasteful, but utterly repellent to his nature. What we call his vanity or egotism—the weakness which I regard as peculiarly his ‘besetting sin’—seems frequently but another name for this irrepressible talkativeness, this overflow of confidential communication. Hence, having exhausted all other subjects of which he feels and admits his ignorance, he turns with ever new delight to himself—the subject which, though abundantly mysterious, he knows best ; and like a child with a mechanical toy, he invites us again and again to behold that most wonderful of ingenious puzzles—his own inward being. He opens, so to speak, the outer case ; he exposes the curious machinery within. Piecemeal he detaches and removes every single wheel or joint or spring. He takes a childish delight in declaiming on the admirable beauty, fitness, and exquisite delicacy of adjustment of the whole mechanism. And when he has exhausted every single portion of it, with the deftness acquired by long practice, he puts the whole machine in working order again, and asks, as he sets it going, with a mixture of triumph at his own skill and enjoyment of our surprise, if we ever or anywhere saw such a remarkable and curious piece of mechanical ingenuity as he has just displayed to us. Moreover, if we put ourselves back to the environment of Montaigne, we find another explanation of his somewhat peculiar attitude towards the theology of his time. It held high authority, and was avowedly, and very inconveniently adverse to the freedom of thought in

which Montaigne excelled, and which he delighted in displaying in *writing*—that he was, except among familiar associates, equally candid in *speech*, we have hardly sufficient evidence. Even if we suppose that he had himself advanced so far in his skepticism, as to feel safe towards his Maker in *thinking* so freely, it is not likely that he felt anything like the same safety as regarded his neighbours, or the world at large. He may, therefore, have assumed, and I incline to think he did, habitually, in that portion of his work to which attention is here directed, assume a manner obviously not inconsistent with, and fairly attributable to, a lack of *earnestness*. He probably never lost sight of the possible expediency of a retreat from a contest not unlikely in those days to end in *martyrdom*—which I am convinced he would never have courted, and would, had he been tried, ‘most religiously’ have avoided.

MISS LEYCESTER. I must take exception to your ruling, Charles! No doubt Montaigne is garrulous, *il va sans dire*, but to resolve his vanity, and still worse his skepticism, into mere uncontrollable loquacity is to confound the symptom with the disease. Garrulity, when it takes such a form as Montaigne’s, is surely the outward expression of a very intense feeling.

TREVOR. Still Harrington’s argument is not so easily disposed of. Random speaking or writing, and such, himself being witness, was Montaigne’s, may, as we all know, easily incur the suspicion of obnoxious opinions. Indeed so great is the discursiveness of method and multifariousness of material in the *Essays*, that I would almost undertake, by a judicious selection and juxtaposition of extracts, to bring Montaigne in guilty of almost every opinion that has been seriously propounded since the commencement of human thought. But we had better, I think, postpone the consideration of Montaigne’s character until we have before us the data which I have accumulated on the subject. Of course he is much more than the purveyor of easy good-humoured gossip ‘about everything and a few things besides.’ For as he is the especial representative in France, as Pomponazzi in Italy, or Agrippa in Germany, of the new learning—the movement of free modern culture in opposition to mediæval ecclesiasticism—Montaigne in fact, besides being the first of French skeptics, is the earliest

French philosopher. 'The Thales of France,' as Justus Lipsius calls him, not so much because he can claim to be an original thinker, still less the exponent of a systematic scheme of thought or practice, as because being a Frenchman he first presented in the national form, with those characteristics of 'sweetness and light' which mark the best philosophic thought of his countrymen, the speculations and opinions of the ancients, combined in his case into an exquisite '*pot-pourri*' with his own modern instincts and native homely common sense.

MRS. ARUNDEL. But if Montaigne's opinions are so various as to be contradictory, why not give him the 'benefit of the doubt,' and proclaim him a sound philosopher and an orthodox Christian?

DR. TREVOR. Most willingly do I assign him the benefit of doubt, and that of the most pronounced character; because I believe him to be, some few disguises notwithstanding, an arrant unbeliever. Besides which such mutual contradictions annihilate each other, as we have already seen in our chapter on Twofold Truth; and, as you know, conflicting testimony by a witness does not receive the benefit of any one particular construction; it is refused all credence whatsoever.

MISS LEYCESTER. You recommended Mr. Arundel, if he wished to take up cudgels for Montaigne's orthodoxy, to read the Abbé Labourderie's work, *Le Christianisme de Montaigne*. I should like to ask him whether the perusal of that book has satisfied him of Montaigne's Christianity in any generally accepted sense of the term.

ARUNDEL. I daresay Montaigne's Christianity will form part of Trevor's dissertation. I will not forestall what he has to tell us, further than to say that if Montaigne was a Christian in any but the most superficial sense of the word, the fact must be shown by some other method than that employed by the Abbé. Bayle St. John calls his attempt Jesuitical, because it infers Montaigne's Christianity from some disconnected extracts of his translation of Raymund's *Natural Theology*. Certainly the ignoring of the direct evidence contained in the *Essays*, and the appeal to a translation which he undertook in obedience to his father's injunctions, afford to my mind a conclusive proof of the weakness of his case.

Moreover, if the matter were so clear as the worthy Abbé pretends, he need not have wasted some six hundred pages on its elucidation and establishment.

HARRINGTON. Just imagine what consternation a rigid application of the Abbé's method would create among our modern army of translators!

MISS LEYCESTER. No doubt the principle may be pushed to an undue extreme; still, a translation voluntarily undertaken does, mostly, imply sympathy to a very considerable extent. Besides, if the Abbé was quite mistaken in inferring Montaigne's sympathy with the orthodox parts of the *Natural Theology*, we should not be justified in inferring his skepticism from the freer portions of the same work.

TREVOR. But with the Abbé it is a main argument; with us it is altogether secondary. Montaigne's skepticism is quite demonstrable from his own admissions, and needs no corroboration from any other source whatsoever. As to his Christianity, it is the *cruce* of his commentators, and for a good reason—it constitutes the x or 'unknown quantity' of his intellectual equation. I have solved the problem as well as I can; but only with the result of discovering in his 'Christianity' the strongest proof of his religious skepticism. From one point of view *Le Christianisme de Montaigne* may be regarded as a literary feat. I at least should have thought it impossible, before reading it, that so dull and leaden a book could have been written on so mercurial a theme.

MISS LEYCESTER. There are certain persons whom M. Gustave Brunet calls 'Montaignologists,'¹ who are trying to do the same service for the great Essayist which our Chaucer and Shakespeare societies are endeavouring to effect for those poets. Do you know whether their researches have thrown any new light on Montaigne's thought or character?

TREVOR. So far as I can determine, none worth mention—no more in fact than the labours of Shakespeare societies have effected in modifying, to any considerable extent, what has always been known of our great dramatist's genuine works.

¹ 'Montaignologue.' M. Ste Beuve has entered a well-merited protest against the use of this word as peculiarly inappropriate to Montaigne. *Causeries du Lundi*, iv. p. 80.

For that kind of literary labour, pushed to the extreme which it often is now-a-days, I have but scant sympathy. To spend a lifetime in the accumulation of such dreary scraps of information as might be furnished by a man's butcher's bills, or his signature to unimportant business documents, appears to me the greatest possible waste of time and energy. It is the mere scavengery of literature—a kind of Lazarus occupation, 'gathering the crumbs which fall from the rich man's table.' When I have myself sat at the table and enjoyed the dishes, the mice are welcome to the crumbs.

ARUNDEL. I entirely differ from you, Doctor, and would reply to your quotation by another from the same source. I say of every 'rich man,' *i.e.* every famous man in art, science, or literature, 'Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.'

TREVOR. According to my experience, such 'gatherings' mostly result in 'nothing being found.'

HARRINGTON. Your skepticism, Doctor, appears to me perfectly misplaced. I agree with Arundel. Literary antiquarianism is not only justifiable in idea, but has frequently achieved invaluable results which could never have been attained by any other process than the patient sifting of literary 'waste,' to which you have given the uncomplimentary name of 'scavengery.' Take, *e.g.* Shakespeare. It is not as modifying his dramas that Shakespeare societies set themselves to investigate every discoverable record of his life, and to prosecute their search in the most unlikely places, but as throwing incidental light on his character and circumstances. Emerson, you remember, notes it as an observable fact that while he was writing *Macbeth*, he sues Philip Rogers in the borough court of Stratford for 35s. 10d. for corn delivered to him at different times; whence he not unfairly infers that he was a good husband, with no reputation for eccentricity or excess. Such casual and homely information was certainly well worth the pains taken to acquire it.

MISS LEYCESTER. What you call literary antiquarianism is connected, I presume, with the universal curiosity respecting the personal habits of all great personages, from royalty downwards. In some respects the feeling may have a very adequate

basis; for it springs, or may spring, from the conviction of the importance of personal habits or minor circumstances for determining a man's character. In itself it is not a matter of profound concernment what time such a king used to rise in the morning, whether he took a cold bath, how much time he allotted to his duties and how much to his pleasures, etc.; but the answers to such questions help to determine his royal qualities; like secondary characteristics in plants or animals, they contribute to his classification as *e.g.* among *rois faineants* or their opposites. To superficial people it might seem absurd that a man capable of writing *Macbeth* should have troubled himself about 35s. 10d.; and that while inditing the witches' scene, or depicting Lady Macbeth's 'slumb'ry agitation,' he was inwardly debating 'how he might compass that rogue Rogers, and procure paymente of his lawfulle debte;' but to those who study human character in detail, and are aware on what small issues its larger generalizations depend, will cherish all these small mementoes as invaluable indications of personal tendencies.

MRS. HARRINGTON. That is to say, the 'crumbs from a rich man's table,' even when we have partaken of some of the dishes, may help to fill up our knowledge of the man's cookery and his general household economy.

HARRINGTON. More than that, Maria. It may throw a fuller light on his true character than we could gain from his writings, even in the case of so communicative a writer as Montaigne. When in the South of France the summer before last, I got at Bordeaux a work on Montaigne by a local antiquary¹ (the same that I lent to you, Trevor), which gave some curious disclosures as to his family and ancestors. All his biographers agree that he was exceptionally vain of his supposed descent from the old feudal possessors of the Seigneury of Montaigne, and most of them regarded Scaliger's assertion,² that his father was a 'seller of herrings,' as an unworthy aspersion on the noble lineage of the great essayist; though,

¹ *Michel de Montaigne son origine sa famille*, par Theophile Malvezin, Bordeaux 1875.

² *Scaligerana Secunda*, Art. 'Montaigne' (p. 457).

as Dr. Payne remarked, such a circumstance, if true, was more to the honour of herring merchants than derogatory to himself. Now it seems that, spite of Montaigne's allusions to his long line of feudal ancestors, their warlike avocations, etc., and his remark, conceived in the essential spirit of feudalism, that 'the sword was the sole fitting employment of French nobles,' that his grandfather was a general merchant of Bordeaux, who trafficked in wines, salt fish, and other commodities. It also appears that the chateau of Montaigne had only been in the possession of his family for one generation, his father being the only one of his 'ancestors' born there; and that, instead of giving their family name to the Seigneury, they took the name Montaigne from it—their own family name being the bourgeois and common one of Eyquem. Now what a flood of light do these facts, only recently discovered, throw upon Montaigne's barefaced assertion, that, 'most of his ancestors were born at the chateau of Montaigne, and bestowed upon it their affection and their name,' or when we discover in a record of Montaigne's family, published by Dr. Payen, a note of his own birth, with the pen drawn across the surname Eyquem. What a curious comment is thereby afforded on the 46th Essay of his First Book, in which he inveighs bitterly against the custom of noble families assuming the name of their seigneuries instead of the proper name of their families! No doubt we knew, apart from these discoveries, that Montaigne was vain; besides being also 'divers et ondoyant'; we have his own candid admission of both of these weaknesses; but I think we may plead that the excess as well of the vanity as of the waywardness, is demonstrated in a peculiarly vivid manner by these antiquarian researches.

TREVOR. Perhaps in these cases I ought to admit the services of antiquarianism, though it is easy here as elsewhere to exaggerate them. Shakespeare's being alive to the importance of securing payment for his corn, does not convey to me a single trait of character that I was previously ignorant of. Any diligent reader of his works must have concluded that, with all his imaginative fervour, he was quite a business man. As to Montaigne, he so repeatedly reproaches himself with vanity, folly, and even falsehood, that an additional corrobor-

ation of the truth of those charges does not seem to me to amount to much.

MISS LEYCESTER. But this disclosure goes beyond that; for it reveals, casually and incidentally, a fact respecting which Montaigne, with all his vaunting of self-analysis and his eulogiums on his introspective sincerity, is guilty, not only of a 'suppressio veri,' but of a 'suggestio falsi.' He undoubtedly wished his contemporaries to believe—what most of his readers have believed to the present day—that he had a long feudal pedigree; whereas he was actually descended from a merchant.¹

ARUNDEL. But I thought Montaigne had English blood in his veins. He certainly claims kindred with our race.²

TREVOR. Merely so far that his surname of Eyquem which, notwithstanding Harrington and the antiquarians, he does not seem to me to evince any desire to suppress, was common to an English family. Some have converted it to Egham, others to Oakham. But the derivation of Eyquem is too uncertain to allow us to draw any inference from it. Could it have been proved the equivalent of Ockam, the coincidence would, for us, have been interesting.

HARRINGTON. Whatever the merits or demerits of Montaigne, we must allow him one conspicuous attainment—and that too of a skeptical kind—I mean Ataraxia. This quality is not only reflected in his *Essays*, but is engendered by them. Indeed, I do not know any work so well adapted to create a placid, genial, many-sided equanimity as Montaigne's *Essays*. So far he is an illustration, second only to Sokrates, of the influence of Pyrrhonic suspense in generating philosophic calm.

ARUNDEL. It seems to me, Harrington, that you are confounding two very different things, viz., the Ataraxia resulting from the perpetual equilibration of divergencies or antagonisms, whether in speculation or in practice, and mere constitutional indifference or *insouciance*. The latter, more than the former, was, in my opinion, the secret of Montaigne's apathy. He was

¹ M. Malvezin op. cit. p. 89, etc. Payen, *Nouv. Doc.* p. 10; comp. Bayle St. John, *Montaigne the Essayist*, vol. i. p. 16.

² See on this subject Bayle St. John's work, vol. i. p. 9. A recent German historian of Philosophy goes so far as to call Montaigne a 'sohn eines gebornen Engländer,' which he certainly was not. Erdmann, *Grundriss*, etc., i. 552.

one of Nature's stoics, blessed with a "hard heart and sound digestion." Genuine philosophic calm resembles, in my opinion, religious composure so far that it is the effect of effort, of watchfulness, of a certain amount of earnestness. Even the Pyrrhonists themselves admit this. But Montaigne was incapable both of effort and earnestness. He would have been equally calm, in the sense of indifferent, had he never heard of Pyrrhon's philosophy.

TREVOR. I agree with Harrington, in attributing Montaigne's Ataraxia to his philosophy; and I think you are doing him great injustice. The constitutional *insouciance* you mention is a half-brutish stolidity which comes from want of thought. Now, whatever else Montaigne may have been or not been, he was indubitably a thinker, and that of a very profound and logical type. Nor was he by any means destitute of feeling. Indeed, he was endued with sensibility of a very high order. He tells us that he was so acutely sympathetic, that he could never hear any one cough without feeling a desire to imitate him. No doubt he succeeded in maintaining a stoical composure towards the ills and vicissitudes of life; but this was attained in the way you commend, by self-discipline, by persistent thought, and reflection, just as in point of fact, his skeptical Ataraxia was the fruit of his antithetical habit, and his endeavour to attain on all subjects a just mean, equally removed from every extravagance and extreme.

I will now begin my paper:—

Passing from the Renaissance in Italy, with its many-sided aspects, its wide-spread results, its sudden creation of a national literature and language, and its galaxy of illustrious names, to the chief representatives of the same movement in France, we become conscious both of resemblances and contrasts. On the one hand some of the general causes we have considered, as contributing to the progress of Free-thought in Italy, co-operated also in the growth of Enlightenment in France. The chief coefficient in the former was also a primary agent in the latter, viz. the study of the classics. They agreed, moreover, in an antipathy to Scholasticism and dogma, and in a direct appeal to Nature and simplicity. Both adopted skepticism as a necessary mode of deliverance from intellectual thralldom. But what first strikes us as in instituting a comparison between them is, the preponderance of contrasts over similarities. Montaigne's *Essais*, the

first product of the French Renaissance, was published in 1580; and therefore more than a century after the appearance of the classics of the Italian Renaissance. Indeed the wave of the Italian Enlightenment had lost nearly the whole of its original impetus, and was reduced to a few insignificant eddies when, in reduced volume and energy it began to break on the coasts of France. But this disparity is not what the general history and prospects of the Renaissance during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries would have led us to expect. At the commencement of the thirteenth century the country which of all others possessed the fairest outlook, in respect of approaching enlightenment and Free-thought, was Southern France. It was one of the chief homes of the Troubadours. Placed midway between Spain and Italy, it received at the same time the declining rays of the now setting sun of Arab civilization and culture, and the earlier beams of the rising sun of Italian Classicalism. The Troubadours were not only wandering minstrels, but they occupied to a considerable extent, just as the old Greek rhapsodists did, the position of general teachers and purveyors of Free-thought. They also cultivated, first in Europe, the graces of style and linguistic expression in a language other than the Latin of the Schoolmen and the Church; and this of itself constituted a breach with the old instruments of dogma. Their daring spirit in the interpretation of the same dogmas we have already alluded to. One of the results of their free-culture and humanistic spirit being the birth and development of certain heresies which were peculiarly obnoxious to Rome, not so much on account of their actual conclusions—some of which were sufficiently strange—as because they were permeated by the spirit of intellectual independence and anti-sacerdotalism.

But this promise of an early spring-tide of Free-thought for France was nipped in the bud by the infamous crusade of Innocent III. The general bearing of that event, for Italian Free-thought, I have already glanced at, but it possesses also a distinctive meaning in the history of the French Renaissance. It serves to explain those peculiarities in the progress of the people and the language by which the history of France, from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, is so markedly distinguished from that of Italy. It arrested completely those growing forces which would else have culminated in a Renaissance earlier even than that of Italy. It postponed for two centuries the growth of French Enlightenment. What, left to itself, the many-sided culture of Southern France might have attained, we have no means of knowing, any more than we can predict the definitive results of any other mischievous interference with the advance of human culture and civilization. It has been said that the Troubadours produced no distinguished name, or epoch-making work. They did not combine to create a Homer,

as did the Ionian rhapsodists of Greece, nor a Dante and Petrarca, like the popular minstrelsy of South Italy. But such a reproach is both ungenerous and unjust. Their capacities and possibilities, confessedly brilliant, were cruelly thwarted by Innocent's crusade. It is idle to speculate on the maturity of a life of which we only possess the data of a youth of extraordinary promise; but the forecast would be nothing less than anomalous that did not augur a ripe development just as brilliant and wonderful. But this violent suppression of the nascent Free-thought of South France had also the effect of destroying for many years her commercial energy. The close connexion of a varied commerce with free culture we have already noticed, both in the cases of ancient Greece and modern Italy. Before the thirteenth century the greatest commercial rival of Italy was Southern France. All its chief towns, Marseilles, Avignon, Arles, Narbonne, Toulouse, Bordeaux, were thriving centres of a commercial enterprise which extended its ramifications beyond Italy and Greece to Byzantium and the East; while the trade and other relations between Southern France and the North of Spain were of so intimate a character that the two districts were often regarded and described as portions of one integral country.¹ I need not point out the resemblance in these conditions, so favourable to Free-thought, between South-France and Italy. Indeed the Provençal poetry often manifests an intermixture of foreign ideas and expressions which proves that the exchange of commodities with foreign nations was not limited to their material products or manufactures.² But as I have remarked, this commercial activity was almost totally extinguished by the Pope's crusade. In some of the provinces wasted by De Montfort and his lieutenants, there were hardly inhabitants enough left to carry on the most indispensable of all native industries—the cultivation of the soil.³ Orthodoxy had done its work, and for the time had achieved its aims. Heresy was extirpated according to the formula which the satirist applied to the Roman armies—'They make a solitude and call it peace.'

We must not however forget, in the similarity of predisposing conditions, that there were also divergencies, neither small nor unimportant, between the Italian and French Renaissance; the result of which was to give Italy an undoubted superiority as a field of free-thought. Firstly: the political circumstances of Italy, from the twelfth to the fifteenth century, were better adapted for the growth of intellectual freedom than those of France during the same period, as

¹ Comp. Aubertin *Hist de la langue et de la littérature Françaises au Moyen Age*, vol. 1. p. 279.

² M. Aubertin, op. cit. i. 280.

³ See on the whole subject, Martin, *Histoire de France*, vol. iv. chap. xxiii.

being marked by a much greater share of political liberty. We have already noticed the early rise of the Commons in Italy which took place before the twelfth century. Partly as a consequence of this, partly from other causes, the feudalism generated by chivalry never succeeded in finding a home in Italy except in the Norman kingdom of Naples. In France, on the other hand, feudalism took root and became a powerful factor in its political institutions from the time of the first crusade; accordingly we find that the Commons of France did not succeed in gaining their independence till the latter end of the fifteenth century. This difference in political and social conditions implies necessarily a considerable distinction in respect of aptitude for mental freedom. In Italy the first-fruits of the national Enlightenment at once took form in the national tongue and became the common property of all sections of the community. No caste or class distinction was recognized in respect of intellectual qualities or appreciation of literary merits, whereas the essence of feudalism, normally developed, is to create and intensify such distinctions. Chivalry had no doubt its sentimental and generous side, by means of which its protection was extended to the poor, oppressed, and the weak; but this protection generally implied patronage, and was by no means the perfect social equality that free-culture demands. Even the Troubadours in the height of their prosperity were divided into classes or orders,¹ and the members of the highest order were occasionally scions of noble houses, so that a spice of feudalism was thus introduced even into 'the Gay Science.' Besides, in the political history of France the influences of feudalism received a peculiar intensification and corroboration by their gradual incorporation with the prerogatives of the Crown, instead of being, as in England and Italy, partly annihilated by alliance with the Commons. As a general result, Literature and Enlightenment attained much later in France that freedom and popularity they acquired at their earliest development in Italy. To me the most pleasing and characteristic picture of the Italian Renaissance is the muleteers reciting portions of Dante or the sonnets of Petrarca, or artizans and rustics engaged in singing the songs of Tasso and Ariosto. No such popular interest in the highest products of the national literature meets us in France until the commencement of the sixteenth century, Montaigne's *Essais* being the first really popular work in French literature. For three centuries, from the thirteenth to the sixteenth, the most influential writers in France were foreign. Next to the Greek and Latin classics, men with a taste for culture read Dante, Petrarca, Tasso and Ariosto. A glance at the list of authors quoted by Montaigne reveals the singular poverty of

¹ M. Aubertin, *op. cit.*, p. 298.

French literature in the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. While the *Essais* are studded with quotations from classical antiquity and with frequent cullings from the Italian poets, the native writers of France thought worthy of mention might be counted on the fingers of one hand, Marot, Ronsard, Amyot and Du Bellay being the chief of them. Hence the Italian Enlightenment seems more indigenous and national than the later born Renaissance in France; though, in comparing them, allowance should be always made for the deadly wound the Free-thought of France received from papal tyranny in the beginning of the thirteenth century.

The distinction between the Renaissance in France and in Italy is further evidenced by the effect of each on its own language. The Italian tongue is the creation of the cultural awakening of the nation. Its growth and development are to a considerable extent coeval with the golden age of its literature. Within the compass of little more than a century the language was not only half-evolved, but definitively established by the works of Dante, Petrarca, and Boccaccio. There is little difference between the pure Tuscan of these writers and the literary Italian of the present day; whereas the French of the thirteenth century is almost another language compared with that of its classical epoch—the tongue of Corneille, Molière, and Racine. Even had it attained its maturity in the *Essais* of Montaigne, or the more polished writings of De Balzac—and there have been French authors of repute who have preferred the ‘careless beauties’ of Montaigne to the finished periods of the best French writers of the nineteenth century—still this would make the final evolution of the French language some two centuries later than that of the Italian. Of the causes which contributed to this difference I have already noted one—the sudden arresting of the growth of romance, poetry and language by the Languedoc crusade. To this might be added the disturbed political condition of France during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. But there remains another cause, both of the general distinction between the Italian and French Renaissance, and of the arrested development of the French language, which was one of its concomitants. I allude to the difference in the educational methods of the two countries. Emerging from the comparative darkness of the middle ages, Italy was the first European country to throw off the yoke of the Schoolmen, not only as a system of dogmas, but as a method of education. This it was enabled to accomplish, in part, by the greater freedom of her University foundations, which again was a consequence of her political divisions and rivalries. You remember how Petrarca satirizes the educational systems of his time for their adherence to Aristotle and

dialectic. His invective is a clear indication of the attitude of the Italian Enlightenment to current methods of instruction. The polemic of himself, and fellow Free-thinkers, against the antiquated methods and subjects of teaching, was not lost. With the growth of the Renaissance, the diffusion of Greek and Latin literature and the rapid progress of a general spirit of inquiry, the Italian Universities began to abandon their Scholasticism; or at least they combined with the theological subjects insisted on by the Church, a continuously larger admixture of Philosophy, Natural Science, and *Belles Lettres*. They were able to accomplish this reformation by the free, and in many cases municipal, character of their governments. Our recent discussion on Pomponazzi, and our forthcoming examination of Ramus, will enable you realize the extent of liberty a Professor at Padua enjoyed in the fifteenth century, and how much greater it was than that of a Regius Professor at Paris nearly a century later. The ready eagerness of Italian Universities to embrace all fitting subjects of instruction, even when quite novel and untried, is incidentally illustrated by the establishment of a Dante chair at Florence hardly more than half a century after the poet's death. Some idea of the significance of this step, as manifesting an appreciation of novel teaching, may be gained by asking the question: In how many English towns and seats of learning does a Shakespeare chair exist at the present day?

In France, on the other hand, the methods of Scholasticism continued to survive in her Universities until late in the sixteenth century (1598). Not only so, but an antiquated uniformity was the characteristic of all her seats of learning. The tendency to centralization, which was the natural effect of the consolidation of the monarchy, operated mischievously for its educational establishments. All the Universities in France conformed their instruction and methods to those of the University of Paris; and this, under the gradually increasing ascendancy of the French monarchy, had lost its mediæval reputation for Free-thought and Enlightenment. Clement Marot in the sixteenth century calls the Professors of Art under whom he had been educated, 'grands bêtes,' adding, 'je veux perdre ma part de paradis, s'ils ne m'ont perdu ma jeunesse.'¹ The partial significance of Ramus's struggle with the ruling powers of the University, as we shall see in our next discussion, was his attempt to impart more elasticity to its routine of instruction; while his stress upon Rhetoric as the science of graceful and ornate expression, was in reality an effort to infuse into his pupils something of the humanizing influences of

¹ Marot, Œuv., *Seconde Epistre du Coq à l'Asne*. -

poetry and *Belles Lettres* which the Italian Universities had adopted long before.

We are now in a position to estimate some of those differences that distinguish the early progress of the Renaissance in Italy and in France. We see why, in the latter country, the movement betrays symptoms as of arrested vitality in a living organism; we discern the reason why it presents, compared with Italy, a less spontaneous and indigenous character. We perceive also the justification of the common classification, which makes Montaigne the chief representative of the French Renaissance; and as occupying, in the sixteenth, a position analogous to that which pertains to Petrarca and Boccaccio in the Italian Enlightenment of the fourteenth, century.

In relation to our special subject, we first of all observe that Montaigne combines most curiously, in his antecedents and circumstances, all the free-thinking influences that were energizing in the France of the sixteenth century, as well as the special advantages which South France enjoyed by its proximity to Spain and Italy.

His father, Pierre Eyquem de Montaigne, was the son of a Bordeaux merchant (as Harrington just now informed us, and in passing, I willingly avow my obligations to the work which he mentions), who seems to have been the first of his ancestors born at the château of Montaigne.¹ He was evidently a man of much original power, as well as of that mental independence which is allied with and often mistaken for eccentricity. Although occupying the position of a country gentleman, and dwelling mostly at his château in Perigord, he took an active part in the religious and political questions of his time. On two occasions he accompanied Francis I. on his Italian campaigns; and I have no doubt brought home some tincture of that Free-thought and humanistic culture of which Italy was at that time the European purveyor. His labours as a *Conseiller* of the Parliament of Bordeaux necessitated his acquaintance with the social and political questions stirring in his own country. That he was a man of some culture is shown by his interest in learned men, *e.g.* with Govea, who for twenty years was president of the College of Guienne at Bordeaux, and one of the first classical scholars in Europe. That his sympathies were to a certain extent liberal, seems evidenced by his enthusiastic approbation of Raymund of Sabieude's *Natural Theology*, and his exhortation to his son Michel to translate it from Latin to French; while his dissatisfaction with the educational methods of his time, and perhaps also some sympathy with the republican aspirations of which his son's friend, La Boëtie, was the

¹ M. Malvezin, *op. cit.*, p. 89, etc. Payen, *Nouv. Doc.*, p. 10. Comp. Bayle St. John, *Montaigne the Essayist*, vol. i. p. 16, etc.

most recognised exponent during that century, might be inferred from the early training to which he subjected his son Michel.

While, then, Montaigne, on his father's side, might claim some affinity with classicalism, as well as with the general culture which French seigneurs not unfrequently brought home from their Italian campaigns, he was connected on his mother's side with the Free-thought of the Spanish peninsula. His mother's name was Lopes, and antiquarian research seems to show that she was descended from a family of Spanish refugees. We know that at the end of the fourteenth century there were large migrations from Spain and Portugal to Bordeaux and the south of France of Jews, Protestants and others, flying from the newly-established Inquisition. There seems indeed reason for believing that Montaigne's mother's family was of Jewish extraction; and that its male members pursued the avocations—so common to Spanish Jews of that age—of merchants and doctors. That she had Protestant sympathies has not been proved; but the fact that one of Montaigne's brothers and two of his sisters were Protestants may afford some slight presumption that such was the case. Perhaps, too, Montaigne's own friendly correspondence with Henry of Navarre may be taken as evincing a leaning to a Protestantism somewhat less austere and bigoted than that of Calvin or the French Huguenots. At any rate he seems to have been connected, on his mother's side, with the Free-thought, and physical science research for which Spain had long been celebrated. Indeed, he himself distinctly admits that many of the peculiarities in his own character were due to his mother's influence.

The child of such parents, Michel de Montaigne may be said to have inherited a character of sturdy independence which was likely to pursue its own intellectual course without much deference to the wishes or prejudices of those about him. He also derived from his parents and family traditions a predisposition to freedom of thought and an insuperable dislike to dogma or constraint of every kind. Michel was the eldest son of his parents, two children born before him having died before coming to manhood. He was born in the year 1513. Of his early training he has left a particular account. It was one of the circumstances of his life of which among others he felt that he had a right to be vain. His father was endowed with sufficient originality to evolve out of his own experience and reason a theory of education. Its chief characteristics were a belief in nature and freedom; a persuasion that education implied evolution, a gradual unfolding from within instead of a forcible shaping from without. It was therefore to be free from constraint, harshness, or compulsion of any kind. The child was to be allured unconsciously

and freely into the paths of learning. Montaigne's father was persuaded that no instrumentality was fitter for awakening the powers of a child's mind, and bringing it by degrees into contact with the greatest minds of antiquity, than the study of Latin; accordingly he gave him from his earliest infancy in charge of a German tutor well skilled in Latin, but entirely ignorant of French. Latin was therefore Montaigne's mother-tongue, and he could both speak and read it fluently before he had attained any knowledge of French. His father pursued the same method in what may be called the social development of his son's character. Instead of bringing him up at his own château and surrounding him with the servants and usages pertaining to a feudal seignury, he gave him in charge of the peasantry on his estate. A peasant woman was selected for his foster-mother, and peasants also for his god-parents. The principle on which his father based this novel method of training seems to reveal his popular sympathies. 'Let him look,' said he, 'rather to those who stretch out their arms towards him than to those whose backs are turned his way.' To such a superstitious extent did Montaigne senior pursue his chosen method of educating his son's mind, 'in all freedom and joyousness without any severity or constraint,' that he caused him to be awakened in the mornings by the sound of some musical instrument. Montaigne himself, while evidently approving this free and delicate method of training, thought it ineffectual in his own case, owing to what he was pleased to denominate his sluggish temperament, which was so great that he could hardly be induced to join other children in play. It is certain that his early training tended to confirm that innate predisposition to a genial good-humoured eclecticism to which his *Essais* so abundantly testify. Between the surroundings of his childhood—his peasant foster-mother and play-mates, the tutor who spoke to him only in Latin, the childish sports, like chess-playing, by which his father meant to teach him Greek—and the careless, desultory, many-sided opinions which he collected and gave to the world in his old age, there is a clear self-evident congruity.

I have already remarked that Montaigne's Free-thought, on his father's side, is connected with the Italian Renaissance. His father had certainly imbibed his theory of education from what he had seen and heard in Italy; and Montaigne himself assures us that it was only on the removal of these Italian associations that his father consented to forego this system of instruction and send him to school.¹

¹ Bayle St. John supposes that he may have derived it in part from a perusal of Rabelais' *Chronique Gargantuine*, published the year before Michel's birth. *Montaigne the Essayist*, i. p. 37.

We may take this as an incidental illustration of the differences then existing between the principles of education current in France and in Italy; and as some proof that the distinction in university teaching we have observed to exist between the two countries extended also to their methods of elementary education. It also demonstrates the singular susceptibility to new ideas which seems to have marked the seigneur of Montaigne, and which he bequeathed in abundant measure to his more celebrated son. Accordingly, at the early age of six years Michel was sent to the College of Guienne in Bordeaux, where he had the advantage of the tuition of classical scholars whose reputations are even now European. He remained there until he was thirteen years old, and was supposed to have finished his education; though in after life his own retrospect of his school life was by no means so warmly cherished as the preceding period of home-training. After quitting the College of Guienne he entered on a course of legal studies, probably at Toulouse or at Paris. This was doubtless intended as a necessary introduction to those magisterial duties to which his father destined him. For some years Montaigne was employed as a member of the Court of Aides in Perigord, and later as a *Conseiller* of the Parliament of Bordeaux. The most memorable incident of this part of his life, in relation to his Free-thought, is his intimate friendship with La Boëtie, only broken off by the death of the latter in 1563. How far this close alliance implies a concurrence with La Boëtie's free political aspirations is one of those obscure points in his life which none of Montaigne's biographers seem able to elucidate. Both Montaigne and his father were professedly loyal supporters of the monarchy; and so far defenders of the 'Voluntary Servitude' against which La Boëtie launched his satire. But we must place on the other side Montaigne's frequently expressed dissatisfaction with a court, together with its concomitants; and the fact that La Boëtie's free opinions in politics were precisely similar in principle to the liberty which Montaigne advocated in philosophy and religion. That his legal studies and magisterial functions were thoroughly distasteful to a man of Montaigne's temperament is self evident, without his own emphatic corroboration. He had no taste for jurisprudence, though, as he complained, his father 'plunged him into it even while a child, up to his very ears.' He 'found it complicated in its forms, violent in its prescriptions, barbarous in its language—full of contradictions and obscurities.' He demanded why common language, 'so easy for every other use, becomes obscure and unintelligible in legal documents?' and he thinks that lawyers have purposely complicated those matters in order to render themselves and their functions the more necessary. He is both astonished and

aggrieved that France, as he characteristically phrased it, had more laws than all the rest of the world, and that those laws comprehended 'so many barbarities and atrocities.' His humane mind recoiled especially from the cruelty of legal punishments and the use of the torture. 'Whatsoever,' he said, 'is beyond the simple punishment of death seems to me mere cruelty.'

Cherishing these opinions, and withal endowed with powerful studious proclivities and an indomitable love of freedom, we are not surprised to find Montaigne taking the most important step of his life, *i.e.* retiring from all public functions, at the early age of thirty-seven years, and determining to spend the rest of his life in studious seclusion. A conjecture has been made, which I regard as highly probable, that his motive for taking this step may have been in part political. Dissatisfied with the cruel, high-handed proceedings of Charles IX., he may have wished to resign functions which would have made him an accomplice in the acts of the government. From early manhood he had been an occasional attendant at the French court, though he entertained the most sovereign contempt for the mere profession of a courtier; but from the accession of Charles IX. the government displayed such a combination of imbecility and cruelty that a thoughtful and humane man, as Montaigne was, might reasonably wish to hold aloof from it. That he did not lose the favour of his sovereign by his retirement from public vocations is shown by his being created, in 1571, 'chevalier of the order of St. Michael,' a distinction of which Montaigne was childishly vain. More important than this unphilosophical gewgaw was the literary distinction he acquired in 1569, as a translator of Raymund of Sabieude's *Natural Theology*. That this work was, both on account of its subject and treatment, likely to exercise a considerable effect on a mind like Montaigne's, our recent examination of it might serve to prove, even without the corroboration of his own testimony. It appealed strongly to some of the most fundamental instincts of Montaigne's intellect. Its stress upon Nature as a method of truth-discovery, its attempted reduction of theological truths to their primary constituent elements, its insistence on self-diagnosis, its inductive method of rising from the simplest verities respecting man and nature up to the complicated truths of theology, its undoubted rationalism and suppression of all externally authoritative sanctions for truth—all these qualities appealed to powerful sympathies in Montaigne's disposition, as well as to the matured convictions of his reason. Besides, the outcome of the *Natural Theology* was undoubtedly toleration; and this in Montaigne's estimate was the greatest need of his unhappy country. No student of Montaigne would dream of making Raymund's work the

original inciting cause of his own skepticism. On this, as in all topics of philosophy and literature, his sole appeal was to classical antiquity. So far as his skepticism was not indigenous, which for the most part it really was, he derived it from the fountain head of Sextos Empeirikos and the Greek skeptics. He had long since passed the moderate standpoint of Raymund before commencing the translation of his work; but I think it highly probable that in addition to its own intrinsic interest it possessed a kind of corroborative value for him. It was a confirmation of some of his chosen speculations from an unexpected quarter. Montaigne's dislike to scholastic theology, with its complicated dialectic, was as great as any aversion could be to a careless Epicurean like himself, nor was his opinion of theological methods and disputants generally of a very high character; yet here was a theologian whose arguments were based upon human reason, and who apparently shared his own contempt for convictions attained in any other manner. His translation of Raymund's book may also have contributed to set him forward in his own literary career; for it is noteworthy that his retirement from public functions followed the publication of his translation with only the interval of a few months. It helped, moreover, in my judgment, to form the naïve gracefully negligent style of the *Essais*; indeed it has always been to me a matter of astonishment that of the many admirers of the inimitable careless beauties of the *Essais*, none have thought of tracing the formation of its style to the earlier work on which he was doubtless engaged for several years. From 1569 to 1580 Montaigne was employed mostly in the composition of his immortal work. He recounts more than once the peculiar genius and mode of composition of his *Essais*. Probably no work put together in such a dilettante hap-hazard fashion ever achieved a celebrity so immediate and so enduring. His taste for multifarious reading, which deserved the epithet 'omnivorous' quite as much as Southey's, was one of the most confirmed of his idiosyncrasies; but he suffered, or believed himself to suffer, from a defective memory. To remedy this, he adopted the plan of culling quotations, and writing down his observations on them, together with the thoughts that further meditation on them suggested. Having pursued this course for some years, he had accumulated in his common-place books a considerable quantity of material. When he finally determined to publish, he gathered his various disjointed observations, etc. together, and arranged them under different headings, with as close an approximation to order as they seemed to admit, and in this loose desultory manner he contrived to make an epoch-making work. But there is, we must admit, an undeniable affinity between Montaigne's literary method and his skeptic-

ism. Averse to any decisive opinion or continuous systematic thought, his leisurely 'dips' into various authors, his desultory selections of striking passages, his occasional meditations, his discursive writing 'by fits and starts' as the humour seized him, harmonized well with an eclectic many-sidedness that took cognizance of all opinions, and with a restless vivacious skepticism that was satisfied with none. Soon after the publication of his *Essais*, Montaigne started on a tour through Germany, Switzerland and Italy. This journey he undertook partly on account of his health, partly as a relaxation after his sedentary occupations at Montaigne. What might otherwise have been of no particular importance for our subject, is found to possess a special significance by our possessing a diary of it written partly by Montaigne himself. This work presents us with an invaluable supplementary estimate of his character, his daily habits, his likes and dislikes, both personal and intellectual.¹ It reveals, more unconsciously than the *Essais*, how deeply seated in his disposition were those peculiarities which in speculative matters took the form of skepticism. It paints in hues of extra vividness those strong contrasts of qualities which have been a puzzle to his biographers, and which will remain so as long as they forget the essential dualism or rather manifoldness of his character. We see represented the strange union of little-mindedness with magnanimity, egoism with unselfishness, skepticism with superstition, easy morality with reverence for genuine Christianity, which distinguished him. As a revelation of personal qualities the diary stands almost on a higher level than the *Essais*; while it certainly possesses the advantage of being an unintentional disclosure. It portrays Montaigne in the easy chair and dressing-gown of private life; and is devoid of that suspicion of exaggerating personal eccentricities from which the *Essais* are not altogether free. Without the diary we should not, I think, have estimated so fully the value he placed on religious observances, *e.g.* attending mass, though manifestly less as a means of spiritual benefit than as a social duty. Nor should we have realized so distinctly the half-sympathetic, half-contemptuous regard which he bestows on persons of all creeds who are religious over-much. We should not have known so much of his love for intellectual freedom and mutual tolerance, nor should we have learned so fully the sources of his indifference to most of the current forms of Christianity. Nothing, we find, better pleases him on his journey than discussing with Huguenot or Calvinist pastors some minutiae of their respective creeds; especially those which involved

¹ Comp. Ste Beuve's Essay, 'Montaigne en Voyage,' *Nouveaux Lundis*, vol. ii. p. 156.

patent self-contradictions, *e.g.* Belief in the bodily presence of Christ in the Sacrament. Nor is his criticism of what may be called the 'seamy side' of religious and dogmatic convictions limited to dissentients from his own creed. He is just as ready to note the irreverence of Pope and Cardinals at a solemnization of high mass as he is to mark the puzzlement of a Calvinist pastor in trying to reconcile incompatible beliefs. But of greater significance than anything else, for our purpose, is the amusing indication of that trait in his disposition which is the ground-principle of his skepticism. He traverses the towns of Germany and Italy in just the same mood as he peruses the books in his library. He is as 'divers et ondoyant' in a physical as in an intellectual itinerary. Novelty is the main goal of his effort; perpetual movement from one fresh scene to the other, disliking to travel the same road twice, and so occupied with the changeful delights of his route as to hate the idea of arriving at his destination—precisely the same mood in fact that he evinced in his search for truth. His diary is also useful as telling us the reception his *Essais* met with in the somewhat lax court of Gregory XVI. The points the council of the Index thought right to animadvert upon are interesting both as to what they record and what they omit. Montaigne was bidden to expurgate the following objectionable points, *e.g.* the use of the word Fortune, the quotation of heretical poets, the apology for Julian the apostate, the remark that persons while praying are exempt from vicious inclinations at the time, the opinion that all punishment beyond the infliction of simple death is cruelty, his judgment as to the undogmatic education of children, etc. We may observe that the Pyrrhonism of the book is not mentioned; doubtless as being a method of philosophising too common in Rome, and within the Papal curia itself, to need either notice or reprobation. However, Montaigne, as a professedly true son of the church, was dealt with leniently on his explaining the points inculcated to the authorities; their correction was finally left to his own judgment, and it cannot be shown that he erased or modified a single one of the points suggested to him by his papal critics.

While at Rome, his fellow-citizens at Bordeaux elected him to fill the office of mayor of that city. Montaigne at first declined the proffered honour; but, at the personal request of Henry III., at last accepted it. He returned to his chateau at the latter end of 1581, and commenced his municipal duties, withal warning the Bordelais that they were not to expect too much of him. The remaining portion of Montaigne's life we may pass over summarily. His government of Bordeaux is coeval with one of the most disastrous periods of French history. We may easily conceive, indeed we have his own attesta-

tion of the fact, how the unhappy wars of religion tended to confirm his instinctive dislike for dogma. He himself seems to have steered cautiously through the perils of the time. He studied both his interests and his philosophical instincts in declining an active co-operation either with the League or with the Huguenots. Both sides, indeed seem to have recognised his moderation and neutrality; and were therefore careful not to insist on a partizanship entirely alien to his character. But towards the end of his life Montaigne discerned, in my opinion, the disastrous consequence for France of the success of the League; and this serves to explain in part his closer intercourse with Henry of Navarre. It was to the accession of this monarch that Montaigne looked for a cessation of those evils from which France was suffering; and Henry in his turn seems to have regarded the old philosopher with singular esteem and affection. The correspondence between Montaigne and Henry has been published; and it is difficult to say on which of the two famous names it reflects the greatest lustre. Montaigne died in 1592, after having received the rites of the Church. The piety and submission of his dying hours have often been adduced as an undeniable proof of his catholic orthodoxy, and as if it were a protest against the free opinions of his *Essais*. To me it seems, as I shall presently point out, quite in harmony with Montaigne's disposition, with the ordinary tenor of his life, and with his Pyrrhonic, or rather suspensive, skepticism.

Turn we now to the *Essais* :—

France in the sixteenth century like Italy in the fourteenth and Germany in the fifteenth, was undergoing those convulsive throes which in the political and religious, as in the animal world, are the indispensable conditions of new life. The age of Montaigne was an age of transition, and transition implies and necessitates suspense. Older beliefs were disappearing or becoming modified, newer convictions were beginning to struggle to life. It was the winter of barrenness intervening between autumn and spring.

From this point of view Montaigne's *Essais* is an epoch-making work; not only for the history of French skepticism, but for that of modern literature and civilisation, forming as they do an admirable reflex of the thought, movement and aspiration which were animating men's minds at the Renaissance. Moreover they enable us to estimate, approximately, the amount of culture and learning which were beginning to diffuse themselves over Southern Europe in the middle of the sixteenth century. Montaigne, as we have seen, was not a mere studious recluse. For a considerable part of his life he was a lawyer, a magistrate, a soldier, and a courtier; indeed, for the whole of it he was occasionally engaged in public duties of some kind

or other.¹ There seems, therefore, no reason to suppose that, beyond his own literary tastes, there was anything peculiar in the extent of his reading. How great this was, a superficial glance over his pages will serve to prove. Indeed, his own thoughts, notwithstanding their vigour and originality, are often in danger of being buried under the mass of classical lore adduced for their suggestion or illustration. This peculiarity is animadverted upon by almost every critic of Montaigne. But we must bear in mind the position which the then new learning occupied in France. It was nearly the same as it had been in Italy during the preceding century. Beginning to emerge from the gloom of mediæval superstition, we cannot be surprised if men's eyes were a little dazzled with the new light which was bursting upon them from Greece and Rome. In the first delirium of discovering the diamond mine of ancient learning, it is hardly wonderful that discrimination and judgment were often at fault, that every new stone was proclaimed to be of the first water and of inestimable value. What would be regarded as pedantry in our days was, in Montaigne's time, original research. And we may readily suppose that the samples of ancient wisdom which he and others delighted to incorporate in their pages operated on the inquiring minds of his time like the specimens of gold which the early Spanish navigators exposed to the wondering gaze of their countrymen, as proofs of the existence of an El Dorado in the New World—infusing into them an earnest desire to explore the sources of such wealth for themselves.

But the *Essais* of Montaigne not only reflect the age in which they were written: they also reflect, still more pointedly, if possible, the mind of the author. Considered from the latter point of view, the work must, in my opinion, be pronounced unique. In no literature, ancient or modern, that I am aware of, have we such a perfect example of keen and minute self-analysis. All the changes and inconsistencies which make up such a large portion of every human character, are so clearly depicted and vividly coloured in his description of himself, that they seem almost a caricature. The first glance at the picture reveals such a number of strange, multifarious characteristics of every imaginable kind and every conceivable degree of strength and weakness, consistency and inconsistency, that to attempt to evolve from the wondrous whole anything approaching a firm, coherent, individual likeness seems utterly impossible. Here we find in close juxtaposition dogmatism and skepticism, superstitious belief and unreasoning unbelief. Here we have abject self-detraction by

¹ This aspect of Montaigne's life is exhaustively treated in M. Grün's *La Vie Publique de Montaigne*, 1855. Comp. on the same subject Ste Beuve's paper 'Montaigne Maire de Bordeaux,' *Nouveaux Lundis*, vi. p. 239.

the side of inordinate vanity, maxims of sublime wisdom followed by utterances of stupendous folly, philosophic truths intermingled with childish errors, deep religious feeling alternating with flagrant immorality; in short, an inexhaustible storehouse of the greatest excellencies and most deplorable defects of our common nature. It is not one individual man that is portrayed, it is a kind of colossal collective humanity.¹

‘A man so various that he seemed to be
Not one, but all mankind’s epitome.’

Our business, then, is to fix as far as possible this human kaleidoscope. Out of his self-contradictions we must evolve something like coherency; out of his versatile moods we must extract the more permanent characteristics; from the grimaces and distortions of the mask we must infer what genuine human features lurk beneath.

But the task is not without difficulty. Not merely is it that out of innumerable views and opinions piled together at random, like the wares in a curiosity shop, we have to select those that occur oftenest, or which are put forward with most emphasis. But there is a further difficulty, when this is done. Who is to assure us that our conclusion is true, or that it is one which the subject of them would approve? For Montaigne has a cynical and avowed disdain for such a commonplace merit as consistency. He is confessedly the sport and plaything of every chance thought, or passing emotion. He deliberately advances an argument for the pleasure, on another occasion, of refuting it; and, lest his reader should be perplexed and provoked at such a wanton display of unphilosophical frivolity, he coolly avows his predilection for desultory methods of thought, arising out of accidental and haphazard occasions; and plainly informs us that we are to take his utterances as the mere expression of his mood and thought at the precise moment when they were uttered.²

Amid this heterogeneous mass of incongruities, and in spite of his

¹ This characteristic of his *Essays* was not hidden from Montaigne. Cf. book ii. chap. 2, Hazlitt’s Trans. p. 371, ‘Authors have hitherto communicated themselves to the people by some particular and foreign mark, I the first of any, by my *universal being*,’ So Ste Beuve calls Montaigne ‘Cet homme de cabinet qui avait en lui l’étoffe de plusieurs hommes,’—*Nouveaux Lundis*, vol. ii. p. 177. Compare the same author’s imaginary funeral of Montaigne, *Port Royal*, ii. p. 451.

² ‘Car aussi ce sont icy mes humeurs et opinions; ie les donne pour ce qui est en ma creance, non pour ce qui est à croire: ie ne vïoe icy qu’a descouvrir moy mesme, qui seray par adventure aultre demain, si nouvel apprentissage me change.’—*Essais*, Liv. i. chap. xxv. Edition Didot, p. 62. Comp. Hazlitt, Trans. p. 60.

cynical disregard for ordinary modes of systematic exposition, a close examination enables us, I think, to discern something like a method and a purpose. The method, direct, earnest, and determined, is skepticism: the purpose is toleration—incidental, hesitating, hardly consciously avowed.

That Montaigne was a skeptic would at first sight seem a superfluous assertion. There is hardly a page of his *Essays* which does not bear emphatic evidence to the fact: indeed, the work has been for some centuries the national armoury of the most skeptical nation in modern Europe; although the weapons contained in it were all forged and tested in the skeptical schools of ancient Greece. Hence we find that repeatedly, though in his characteristic, slipshod, incidental manner, Montaigne urges the weakness of the reason, the fallaciousness of the senses, the untrustworthiness of experience, the uncertainty of opinion; or else truth is affirmed to be impossible, and doubt proclaimed as the highest wisdom, or some other customary argument or affirmation which our researches have shown to be more or less common to all skeptics. If a collection were made, and put in something like order, of all the unbelieving suspensive utterances contained in his *Essays*, a complete exposition of skepticism might easily be obtained; but a connected dissertation on such a dangerous topic was utterly alien both to Montaigne's desultory methods of thinking and writing, and to his habitual caution, and fear of compromising himself with higher powers. Hence, if we set aside the well-known 12th chapter of the 2nd book, containing his Apology for Raymund of Sabiende, in which we have a fairly continuous exposition of Pyrrhonism; and possibly the 10th chapter of the 3rd book, in which, under the suggestive heading 'Of cripples,' he enters a protest against modern miracles,—his appreciation of skepticism, and his profound dislike of and contempt for dogmatism, is conveyed by casual incidental hints, and in a desultory; nay, often in an utterly irrelevant manner. But, apart from these open admissions and numerous scattered hints, ample evidence of the real bent of Montaigne's thought is furnished by the general tone and drift of his writings—what might be called the 'circumstantial evidence' of his skepticism. For myself, I confess that I regard this kind of proof in the case not only of skepticism, but of every unpopular and contraband mode of thought, with even more favour than occasional and isolated admissions; for it denotes not a momentary mood, such as might be caused by a mere ebullition of feeling, but the general and uniform temper of mind of the writer. It is the unconscious witness, and on this account all the more valuable, of the habitual state and direction of his intellect.

I propose to arrange what I have to say as to the nature and extent of Montaigne's skepticism under a few simple heads—taking first the indirect arguments bearing on the point; and secondly, examining what I cannot but regard as direct and positive admissions of the fact, *i.e.* as positive as any admission of such a fact could be expected of Montaigne.

His treatment of the senses, and the character of their deliverances, will soon enable us to appreciate the nature of our task. In one place he informs us 'with a distinctness,' as a recent critic remarks,¹ 'which leaves nothing to be desired, that it is most absurd to deny the plain evidence of the senses, *e.g.* that fire does not burn or the sun does not give light; . . . there is no belief or knowledge in man which can be compared to their plain verdict in respect of certitude.'² He tells us further 'that all knowledge is conveyed to us by the senses; they are our masters, science begins by them, and is resolved into them.'³ No doubt, taken by itself, this language is sufficiently explicit; but a very slight acquaintance with Montaigne's method, as well as the experience we have attained of the class of minds to which his own belongs, is enough to warn us that such general admissions may easily be neutralized and rendered ineffective by an analysis which denies in parts what has been conceded as a whole. Sextos Empeirikos, as we have seen, insists on the trustworthiness of phenomena, as such; but this does not prevent his proof that taken simply the senses are liable to perpetual mistakes and perversions, and are therefore by no means infallible. Similarly Montaigne qualifies his general admission of the certainty of our sense-knowledge by a careful scrutiny into the many sources of their erroneous conclusions. He finds, *e.g.* in the senses, 'the greatest foundation and proof of our ignorance.'⁴ He dwells on the possibility, in the case of other beings, of senses varying in kind as well as degree from those possessed by man. He quotes the familiar instances of the mistakes of the senses with which Greek skepticism abounds, *e.g.* the false impression conveyed by a simultaneous pressure with the tips of two fingers on a musket-ball. He points out how the senses are continually imposed upon by imperfections inherent in the physical structure of their organs, or else in their *modus operandi*. He shows that they are perverted by the emotions and passions of the soul, on which they themselves exercise on the other hand a prejudicial and deceptive influence. No doubt some

¹ Hermann Thimme, *Der Skepticismus Montaigne's*, Göttingen 1875.

² Bk. ii. ch. xii. Hazlitt's Trans., p. 275.

³ Bk. ii. ch. xii. *Ibid.*, p. 275.

⁴ Bk. ii. ch. xii. *Ibid.*, p. 274.

kind of reliance on the senses is imperative. A man 'cannot avoid owning that the senses are the sovereign lords of his knowledge; but they are uncertain and falsifiable in all circumstances: 'tis there he is to fight it out to the last, and if his just forces fail him, *as they do*, to supply that defect, with obstinacy, temerity and impudence. In case what the Epicureans say be true "that we have no knowledge if the senses' appearances be false"; and if that also be true which the Stoics say, that "the appearances of the senses are so false that they can furnish us with no manner of knowledge," we shall conclude to the disadvantage of these two great dogmatical sects (and surely of all others), that there is no knowledge at all.'¹ Whereupon follows an elaborate exposition of the error and uncertainty of the senses, preceded by the statement that every man may furnish himself with as many examples as he pleases, so ordinary are the faults and tricks they put upon us;² and closing with a verdict equally conclusive and important for Montaigne's skeptical position in this particular: 'We cannot know what things truly are, in themselves, seeing that nothing comes to us but what is falsified and altered by the senses. Where the compass, the square and the rule are crooked, all propositions drawn thence, and all buildings erected by these guides, must of necessity be defective; the uncertainty of our senses rendering everything uncertain that they produce.'³ Language of a stronger character it would be impossible to imagine; and however much some writers, as *e.g.* Herr Thimme, may endeavour to lessen its effect by pronouncing much of it extremely ironical ('stark ironisch'), no candid reader, even after making the greatest possible allowance for Montaigne's love of paradox, and his cynical humour, can resist the conclusion that his distrust of the senses and the information conveyed by them is as complete as the same belief or unbelief of the extremest skeptic, whether ancient or modern.

Equally explicit is Montaigne in his contemptuous estimate of the reason, to which the appeal on behalf of the truth next lies. 'Seeing the senses cannot determine our disputes, being full of

¹ Herr Thimme, whose theory of Montaigne's skepticism is that it is a simulated Pyrrhonism, adopted as a weapon against dogmatism, not against knowledge (though he nowhere touches on the relation of dogmatism to knowledge, nor considers the question how far an attack on the former necessarily includes the latter), remarks on this important passage 'Da haben wir einen solchen "*tour d'escrime*" den Montaigne nur gegen die dogmatische Wissenschaft, keineswegs gegen das Wissen überhaupt führt.'—*Der Skepticismus Montaigne's*, p. 14.

² Book ii. chap. xii. Hazlitt, p. 277.

³ Book ii. chap. xii. *Ibid.*, p. 281.

uncertainty themselves, it must then be reason that must do it; but no reason can be erected upon any other foundation than that of another reason; and so we run back to all infinity.'¹ To the subject of this short argument Montaigne recurs again and again. The Impotence of the Reason is in fact a primary and incontrovertible axiom in his philosophy. We find it stated in every conceivable variety of form and manner, context and connexion; and enforced and adorned with a lavish wealth of illustration. Especially does he seek to prove his point not only by adducing the manifold and inconsistent opinions of philosophers, but by an introspective analysis, at once keen and humorous, of the caprice, waywardness, and instability he finds within himself. Herein Montaigne has added a new method to those of preceding writers (with the single exception perhaps of Rabelais); or rather to the objective arguments gathered from the history of human thought, he adds the personal subjective criterion so congenial to himself. This masterly piece of self-analysis Montaigne commences with the ironical confession: 'I that watch myself as narrowly as I can, and that have my eyes continually bent upon myself, like one that has no great business to do elsewhere, dare hardly tell the vanity and weakness I find in myself.'² Whereupon he treats us to a long and amusing account of the caprice and vacillation which he calls his vanity.³ Nor is this, as is too commonly supposed, the mere outcome of a morbid egoism which leads him to magnify every infirmity belonging to himself. For my part I think this quality has been assigned to wrong motives by his critics. It is not because they are Montaigne's own idiosyncrasies that these traits are remarkable; but that being his own he has a greater power of apprehending them than he could possibly have in the case of any one else. Their importance lies in the fact that they constitute a subjective corroboration of a large number of objective phenomena. We shall have to touch upon this argument again when we come to speak of his confession of ignorance among the positive proofs of his skepticism.

But although Montaigne repeatedly denounces Reason, he would hardly be consistent if he were devoid of inconsistency on this as on other subjects. Hence we find occasional passages in which a

¹ Book ii. chap. xii. Hazlitt, p. 281.

² Cf. Bk. ii. ch. xii. Hazlitt, p. 263; cf. Book ii. ch. i. Didot, p. 169. 'Nous sommes tous de loppins et d'une contexture si informe et diverse que chascue piece, chascue moment faict son jeu; et se treuve autant de difference de nous à nous memes que de nous à aultruy,' words which lose their Montaignesque flavour in a translation.

³ Book ii. chap. i. Hazlitt, p. 154.

higher estimate of the reason is forced upon him. He tells us, *e.g.* that 'every human presupposition and declaration has as much authority one as another, if reason do not make the difference.'¹ Moreover when he subordinates the human reason to the Divine, or human truth to religious verity, as he does in more than one passage of the *Essais*, he does not scruple to add that we can only estimate or attain the Divine through and by means of the human.² The following passage bearing on this point is too characteristic to be omitted. 'If it (Divine knowledge) enter not into us by an extraordinary infusion, if it enters not only by reason but moreover by human ways (*i.e.* probably by the senses), it is not in us in its true dignity and splendour, and yet *I am afraid we only have it by this way.*'³ An interesting example by the way of the conflict of theological with rationalistic modes of thought of which we have repeated instances in the *Essais*.

To the credit side of his estimate of reason from the theological or orthodox point of view, must also be added certain ostensible and apparently sincere attempts to make his depreciation of reason subserve the cause of religious dogma. This is the well known argument of 'methodised skepticism' which Descartes applied to philosophy, and Augustine, Huet, and so many other ecclesiastical skeptics to theology. In the rapid development of skepticism which marked the Renaissance, such an argument occupied necessarily a prominent place. We have already had occasion to touch upon it incidentally; but must reserve for the present a full discussion of its merits and bearings. Although not unduly obtruded on our notice by Montaigne, it is evident that he laid considerable stress upon it. The argument was eminently suited to his position and temperament; because it enabled him to combine a specious profession of adherence to the Church, with a private licence of speculation which was practically unlimited. In this as in all his reasonings, Montaigne is utterly regardless of caution in his procedure, or moderation in his statements. He is, as he himself admits, the mere passive instrument of the dominating thought of the moment, whether its tendency be religious or profane, superstitious or skeptical.⁴

¹ Book. ii. chap. xii. Hazlitt, p. 251.

² The same argument is distinctly and repeatedly laid down by Raymond of Sabieude; see *Evenings with the Skeptics*, vol. ii. pp. 432-466.

³ Bk. ii. ch. xii. Hazlitt, p. 201: with which compare another striking passage, Bk. ii. ch. xii. Hazlitt, p. 263: 'The things that come to us from heaven have the sole right and authority of persuasion, the sole mark of truth: which also *we do not see with our own eyes, nor receive by our own means.*'

⁴ 'For my part,' says he, 'I must own that the puff of every accident not

Hence his language on human frailty; the necessity of faith as a substitute for knowledge, the doctrine that truth and wisdom belong only to God; that principles (of demonstrated knowledge) must be Divine and intuitive; is so vigorous, and so highly flavoured with (apparently) genuine fervour and devotional unction, that it might easily have emanated from a disciple of Calvin, or St. Augustine.¹

But after making all due abatements both for his exaltation of it in the interests of philosophy, and for his depreciation of it in the interests of theology, Montaigne's general treatment of human reason must be pronounced cynical and contemptuous in the extreme. He exhausts himself in 'base comparisons' to denote its unprincipled duplicity, and consequent worthlessness as an arbiter of truth. He calls it a two-edged sword dangerous to handle by the unskilful, and as ready to wound the wielder as the adversary against whom it is unsheathed. It is like the shoe of Theramenes, which will fit any foot:² or it is compared to a pot with two handles, which may be lifted with either, or it is like lead or wax prepared to receive any impression. Instead of being, what it professes to be, the guide and ruler of humanity, it is most frequently its veriest slave; the ready and unscrupulous agent of its superstitious beliefs, its absurd customs, and its most foolish and nefarious actions.

In short, human reason and judgment is with Montaigne a self-convicted mass of inconsistencies. It is at once the source of truth and the cause of error. It both elevates and degrades our human nature. By its means men are raised to the loftiest pinnacle of wisdom, or are sunk into the lowest depths of infamy. Those only are to be esteemed wise who turn a cautious and skeptical ear to its double-tongued admonitions; and the brutes are in this respect more fortunate than men, because they lack its uncertain and questionable guidance.³

only carries me along with it, according to its own inclination; but that moreover I worry and trouble myself by the instability of my own posture.'—Hazlitt, p. 154.

¹ Cf Book ii. ch. xii. (Hazlitt, p. 204; also pp. 257–8.) It will be observed that the greater part of this 'clandestine dogmatism' as Sainte Beuve calls it, is found in the famous 'Apology chapter,' which we shall find furnishes the most convincing proof of Montaigne's skepticism.

² Erasmus in his *Adagia* has commented on this proverb. Its origin is in Plutarch's *Life of Nicias*, who says that Theramenes was nick-named 'Cothurnus' from his trimming propensities.

³ Dom Devienne in his *Éloge Historique* well remarks on this characteristic, 'Quoique Montaigne fasse si peu de cas de la Raison, celle qu'il avoit reçue de la Nature n'en étoit pas moins d'une trempe supérieure, et on auroit pu dire d'elle ce qu'on a dit de l'imagination de Malebranche, qu'elle obligeoit un ingrat.'—P. 101.

Our Essayist was not at all likely to pass over in silence the venerable testimony on behalf of skepticism afforded by the conflicting beliefs and usages of different portions of the human race, from philosophers downwards, or as Montaigne would suggest, *upwards*. Independently of the confirmation of his own position derivable from such a mass of historical evidence, the argument must have had more than usual interest for a thinker who, like Montaigne, was so keenly alive to the charms of variety for its own sake, and who regarded, as we shall see further on, such a divergency in the spiritual world as the due and proper analogue to the interminable diversity revealed by the physical world. He repeatedly urges, therefore, the diversity of opinions, usages, etc., in all departments of human faith and practice. The familiar instances, adduced by Greek skeptics, of divergent and conflicting beliefs among different sects and communities, are again brought forward by Montaigne. The endless diversity in manners and customs in different countries, are dwelt upon with renewed emphasis, and with the advantage (by no means ignored by succeeding skeptics) of the additional illustration afforded by the recent discovery of a new world. The whole sum of human thoughts and habits is reduced to custom;¹ from whose tyrannical and universal dominion no condition of human existence is exempt. Both in religion and in morals we see the same diversity founded on the same law of custom. Philosophers and theologians *e.g.* have exhausted every imaginable hypothesis in their numberless attempts to define the Deity; and so great is the power of imagination pertaining to every man, that the ideas of God will probably vary in exact proportion to the number of minds who attempt to conceive and define it. Christianity, moreover, is a 'mere geographical expression,' and 'we are Christians for the same reasons that we are Germans or Perigordians.'² Ethical maxims have similarly a purely local origin and value; so that which is good or seemly among ourselves is esteemed evil or indecorous among others. Montaigne, as we have said, loves this infinite diversity in the phenomena of human life.³ Not only is it the reflex of nature, but also of the perpetual shiftings and changes he discerns within himself. A dead level of uniformity in the history of the human mind, supposing it possible, would have been insufferably tedious to one whose own mind was for ever undergoing some new modification, some abrupt and unexpected transformation or transition. He would have felt as much out of sympathy with his species and historical surroundings as the restless ocean wave might be supposed to feel when wasting its strength on an unwearable cliff. To a nature such

¹ Cf. Book i. chap. xxii.² Book ii. chap. xii. Hazlitt, p. 203.³ Cf. Letter to Madame de Duras, book ii. ch. xxxvii. Hazlitt, p. 363.

as Montaigne's, impressionable, mobile, inconstant,—diversity, whence-soever obtained, was the natural and only proper aliment. With a mixture of naiveté and cynicism peculiar to himself, he assures us that he always agreed for the time being with the author he was reading, no matter what his opinions were, and though he was perfectly aware that the different ideas he thus tried to assimilate, conflicted as much as possible with each other.¹

With such an outspoken contempt for the faculty, it is only reasonable to expect a corresponding distrust of its instrument or mode of expression. Accordingly, Montaigne has several incidental remarks on the nature and properties of words, and their contribution to the sum total of incertitude in which all things human are enveloped. He is, of course, a Nominalist. Words are to him as to all other skeptics, the mere arbitrary marks or signs of things. 'The name,' he says, 'is a voice which denotes and signifies the thing; the name is no part of the thing, or of the substance; 'tis a foreign piece joined to the thing and outside of it.'² Still, his remarks on the subject are for the most part fragmentary. I have often wondered that among his Essays there is not one especially devoted to words, apart *i.e.* from proper names, and the methods of rhetoric.³ I should have thought it precisely the kind of subject to have attracted his notice, and for which his mode of treatment was pre-eminently well qualified. How he might have revelled in the manifold uncertainties of his theme. What humorous satire might have been expended on the invincible tendency of mankind to accept words instead of things. What invective might have been poured on the hollow pretentiousness of mere verbosity. What examples of cruel wars caused by words,⁴ of great churches severed by a few syllables, of martyrdom inflicted on account of the difference between two letters, while each step of the argument might have been illustrated by abundance of instances drawn from ancient and modern history. A delightful sample of the method he would have employed in handling this subject he gives us in chap. 13 of Book iii., when, apropos of Luther and the fact that he had stirred up more doubts than he had allayed, he says, 'Our contestation is verbal. I demand what nature is; what pleasure, circle, and substitution (*i.e.* the well-known terms of Luther's technical

¹ Book ii. chap. xii. Hazlitt Trans., p. 266.

² Hazlitt Trans., p. 288-9.

³ These he ridicules in the 46th and 51st chapter of his first book.

⁴ Words as causes of legal disputes Montaigne does mention: 'Most of the occasions of disturbance in the world are grammatical ones; our suits only spring from disputes as to the interpretation of laws; and most wars proceed from the inability of ministers clearly to express the conventions and treaties of amity of princes.'—Hazlitt Trans., p. 244.

theology) are? The question is about words, and is answered accordingly. A stone is a body, but if a man should further urge "and what is a body?—substance;"—"and what is substance?" and so on, he would drive the respondent to the end of his common-place book. We exchange one word for another, and very often for one less understood. I know better what man is than I know what animal is, or mortal, or rational. To satisfy one doubt, they give me three: 'tis the hydra's head. Sokrates asked Menon what virtue was? "There is," says Menon, "the virtue of a man and of a woman, of a magistrate and of a private person, of an old man, and of a child." "Very well," says Sokrates, "we were in quest of one virtue and thou hast brought us a whole swarm"; we put one question and they return us a whole hive.¹

Such seem to me the more prominent among the indirect evidences of Montaigne's skepticism. If none other existed, we should have no difficulty in pronouncing a definitive verdict on the matter, especially with the light thrown on his procedure, by what we have seen of the similar methods of other skeptics. But there is, besides, an overwhelming amount of evidence of a direct and positive kind, concerning which the main difficulty is to determine how much of it is meant for jest, how much for earnest.

Not that Montaigne ever avowed in so many words his skepticism. Nowhere does he say, 'I am a professed skeptic,' still less 'I am a disbeliever.' Anything like a distinct declaration of a conviction, even of a negative kind, involved far too great an effort for the easy cynical indifference which he cultivated. While he had learnt too well the proper rôle of a skeptic to commit himself to express negation, he knew that a definite denial was just as dogmatic, just as open to the charge of presumption or omniscience, as a positive affirmation. Indeed, of the two, he distrusted the negative more than its opposite. In either case, he disliked the coarse robustness of thought and action which is the accompaniment of intense and overmastering conviction. His experience of himself showed him the easy conditions on which a placid semi-affirmative might be maintained; and the civil wars of his day demonstrated, as it seemed to him, the excesses which follow in the train of purely negative principles, whether in politics or religion. Hence, Luther, with his crude unqualified denial of some dogmas, and his obtrusive positiveness with respect to others, was immeasurably more repugnant to Montaigne's temperament than the easy elastic faith of the cultured and refined Romanist. Erasmus, and not the monk of Wittenberg, would have been his ideal

¹ Book iii. chap. xiii. Hazlitt Trans., p. 495.

Reformation leader, *i.e.* supposing him to have admitted the need of Reformation.

Montaigne's position was therefore the genuinely skeptical one of suspense. He took as his motto, not the absolute assertion of negative skepticism, 'knowledge is impossible,' but the interrogative one of '*Que sais je ?*'¹ This, moreover, is not only his own motto, engraved on his seal, etc., it is inscribed in a variety of forms and characters on the roof-timber of his library. We find it in the forefront of his *Essays*, as the human excellence which of all others is most commendable. It is evidently the cherished persuasion of his innermost being, the only avowed conviction with which he can safely be credited. The reticence he observed, in the face both of belief and disbelief, he here changes for open-mouthed and fervent profession. It is the single article of his only creed, the standard by which he estimates both his own wisdom and that of his fellow men. 'The confession of ignorance,' says he, 'is one of the fairest and surest testimonies of judgment that I know.'² And though he considers it possible to discriminate between the ignorance which precedes and that which follows knowledge, yet the latter is so vitiated by the suspicious source whence it emanates, that he prefers to take refuge as far as possible in the former; which he calls the 'natural station whence I so vainly attempted to advance.'³ I have already glanced at the religious aspect which Montaigne endeavours to give to this open profession of Nescience, and which assimilates it to the self-renunciation of Greek skepticism. The subject is one on which he frequently expatiates. Man's first sin, he tells us, was curiosity. This is the fatal fruit of the tree of knowledge, the accursed heritage which Adam bequeathed to his posterity; thence came pride, presumption, dogmatism, irreligion; thence the unhallowed claim of a wisdom and knowledge which truly belong only to God. On the other hand the virtues of ignorance and simplicity are pre-eminently of a religious character. Where conscious ignorance exists we may be sure of finding humility, meekness, docility and submission. It is thus the climax not only of worldly, but also of Divine and heavenly wisdom. Montaigne therefore demands, in the interests both of philosophy and religion a frank and unqualified avowal of Nescience. Most of the abuses of the world have arisen from the preposterous fear which

¹ It is an interesting example of Montaigne's indifference, and the cynical contemptuous manner in which he announces his most cherished opinions, that this preference of the question rather than the negation, is made immediately after subjecting it, when considered as the final refuge of Pyrrhonism, to ridicule. Cf. Hazlitt Trans., p. 244.

² Hazlitt Trans., p. 187.

³ Hazlitt Trans., p. 145.

besets mankind of making this avowal.¹ It is one at all events from which Montaigne was singularly exempt. His dread of presumptuous science, and his appreciation of cautious Nescience, was a feeling which, as Bayle St. John properly notes, increased towards the end of his life; being more distinctly marked in his later than in his earlier Essays. One of his latest utterances on the subject is not devoid of genuine plaintiveness, though the Montaignesque humour is by no means lacking. 'Oh, what a soft and delicious pillow and how healthy, are ignorance and incuriosity for the repose of a well-formed head.'

But if Montaigne is so satisfied with the wisdom and piety of his conviction of Nescience, he is just as explicit as to the issues of that consciousness. Sokrates himself cannot exceed the earnestness with which he disclaims any intention of teaching. As he knows nothing himself he is totally unable to instruct others. Were we to ask him, why then indite your Essays? Why cull your choice morsels of heathen wisdom from ancient Greece and Rome? His answer would be, 'I write merely to give, by way of occupation and amusement, utterance to my thoughts, expression to my changeful, vacillating opinions. I have no desire to teach others. I have neither the authority nor wish to be believed, being too conscious of my own ignorance to feel justified in attempting the instruction of other men.'

It is a singular instance of what may be termed the irony of literature, that the two thinkers who, in ancient Greece and modern France, were foremost in maintaining their Nescience and disavowing any power or intention of instructing their age and nation, have actually been their most influential and permanent teachers. I do not wish to insist on what seems to me an undoubted probability, that the influence of Sokrates and Montaigne was in direct ratio of their skepticism; but I think I may fairly argue that the intellectual and moral qualities found in alliance with skeptical suspense, the incentive to thought and self-examination that is furnished by a propaganda of Nescience—the many-sided eclecticism that is the natural outcome of opposition to particular dogma, had, in both cases, a fructifying result not easy to overstate.

In connection with Montaigne's repeated admissions of ignorance, must be placed his no less frequent confessions of fickleness and incertitude. He strongly objected, he tells us, to form an opinion, knowing what a grave responsibility he thereby incurred, and how

¹ Hazlitt Trans., p. 477. 'Dogmatising,' says Joseph Glanvil, 'is the great disturber both of ourselves and the world without us: for while we wed an opinion, we resolutely engage against every one that opposeth it.'—*Scep̄sis Scientifica*, p. 168.

numerous were the chances of his being wrong. This caution, however exaggerated, is only what might have been expected of a professed skeptic. What follows appears, at first sight, stranger; for he goes on to assure us that he was just as loth to *change an opinion*, but the reason assigned for this unexpected manifestation of dogmatism is eminently skeptical; because, as he cynically remarks, his motives for a change of any particular view might be just as unsatisfactory as those that had originally counselled its adoption. So that even the small and fluctuating amount of stable opinion of which he sometimes admits the possession, qualified, as it no doubt was, with conditions and reservations of all kinds, was founded on the skeptical basis of the equal precariousness of *all opinions*. The picture suggested to my mind by this interesting specimen of self-diagnosis is this: Montaigne is like a man who has lost his way in the twilight, amid a wild and dangerous region. He has arrived at his present point by tracks and bye-paths, of which he is uncertain whether they are actual roads or not. Precipices, bogs, traps and pitfalls appear to surround him on all sides. Not a star can he find in the clouded sky to guide him; or what appears the momentary gleam of some remembered constellation, he suspects may be an ocular delusion, or some unreal phantasm. True, there are human lights in the distance, but so many that he knows not which to choose; either or all may be, for aught he knows, mere *ignes fatui*. What is the benighted wanderer to do? To go forward, even if he knew whither, were madness; to go backward were just as rash. To many men such a situation would induce despair. Montaigne however is not easily driven to desperation. Like a genuine Epicurean philosopher, he makes the best of his position. He will quietly remain where he is. Whereupon he replenishes the little lamp which has guided him in the twilight. He finds out the most sheltered spot in his immediate vicinity, opens his wallet of provisions, amuses himself with watching the dark clouds above, the dim and wavering lights beneath, speculates as to what those lights mean, whether they are more to be trusted than his own lantern. Presently he goes to sleep with a drowsy uncertain hope that there may arrive a morning-dawn, and a sunrise, which will clear up his path; if so, well; if not, he can but remain where he is. The picture is perhaps not inviting. I do not conceive it is true of but an infinitesimally small percentage of humanity; but among that percentage we must, I think, give Montaigne a place.

It ought not to appear strange to find side by side with his admissions of uncertainty, a frequent and distinct avowal of credulity. I need not point out how the two are psychologically related.

Suspense being a perfectly poised balance, a pinch of dust is enough to determine a preponderance of inclination to *either* side. Hence, as we shall find, the undue exclusiveness of skepticism is often balanced, mercifully shall I say? by as undue a receptivity. Both being produced by the self-same cause, *i.e.* indifference, or a certain easy flexibility of conviction, capable, under different circumstances, of different and opposite effects. Montaigne admits, more than once, that he receives without question every authority, whether good or bad; and this for the cynical reason that if they are found good, they are so much to his own credit, if bad, so much to their own discredit. The fault is not his but theirs.¹ Certainly the unscrupulous manner in which he heaps up doubtful authorities, unhistorical instances, etc., one on the other, seems to require either justification or apology, though whether this, the only one Montaigne deigns to offer, be sufficient, is perhaps questionable. He is however equally credulous and uncertain in what emanates from himself; so that if on the one hand he is ready in his reading to accept his author's arguments, no matter how great the inconsistency thereby involved, he does not in his writings stipulate for more than just such an easy evanescent belief in his own reasoning; which he therefore guarantees no further, than as expressions of the particular moods in which they were indited.

How much of this kind of language is real, how much of it humorous, ironical, or affected, I do not profess to decide. That uncertainty, as the result of a general condition of unstable conviction, was a prominent element in his mental character is sufficiently obvious. It is marked on every page of his writings and needs no corroboration from his own overt testimony. His main peculiarity, and that which imparts the greatest charm to his writings, is his clear apprehension of facts which mostly lie hidden in the deeper recesses of the human consciousness, and his ingenuous candour in bringing them to the surface, and exhibiting them to public gaze in all their nakedness and deformity. I have already admitted that in this respect, Montaigne is frequently guilty of exaggeration; but I am anxious that such exaggeration should not itself be exaggerated. Besides which, an attentive reader of Montaigne soon acquires the power of discriminating approximately between his genuine sentiments and the humour or cynicism which is merely their form or colouring for the time being. We recognise *e.g.* the humour of his statement that he had recourse to the public confessions of his *Essays* from a regard to the usage of Protestants, who objected to

¹ Cf. Hazlitt, trans. p. 39, 'The tales I borrow I charge upon the consciences of those from whom I have them.'

private (auricular) confessions;¹ and the cynicism of the avowal that in any matter of dispute he was equally ready to take either side. 'I should easily, in case of need, light up one candle to St. Michael and another to his dragon, as the old woman did.'²

(2) But a still stronger admission of skepticism is to be found in Montaigne's famous apology for Raymund of Sabieude. This is in fact that portion of his work which has supplied the historians of philosophy with what they have regarded as a conclusive proof of his skepticism. Herr Thimme, in his monograph, seems inclined to blame the almost exclusive stress on this chapter, which has become customary; and doubts how far it will bear out the verdict of complete Pyrrhonism which is inferred from it.³ In my opinion his blame and his doubt are equally unsustainable. It would be just as reasonable to find fault with a judge who, in directing a jury, should point out the strongest evidence in the case; and indicate what, if they believed the witness, their finding must necessarily be. The 'Apology Chapter' is, as every reader of Montaigne knows, *the* Essay of the whole collection. Not only is it by far the longest and most carefully elaborated, not only is it marked with a gravity and set purpose quite foreign to the writer's usual manner, but it is of especial importance as containing an unusual proportion of personal confessions, indications of opinion, etc., so that his Apology for Raymund may be taken as his own '*Apologia*' as well. Indeed the very occasion of the Essay, and its object of defending his translation of Raymund's work, especially considering the character of that work, are of themselves a sufficient justification of the stress which has been laid upon it.⁴ It is useless to enquire what effect Montaigne's translation of Sabieude may have had on the development of his own views. Bayle St. John believes it to have been considerable.⁵ What is more certain is that it not only suggested to Montaigne the elaborate account which he gives of Pyrrhonism, but elicited an expressed preference for the

¹ Cf. Hazlitt, trans. p. 173, also more explicitly p. 391, 'To meet the Huguenots, who condemn our auricular and private confession, I confess myself in public religiously and purely.'

² Book iii. chap. i. Hazlitt, p. 365. The anecdote is told in Henry Stephens, *Apologie pour Herodote*, vol. ii. p. 325 (Liseux's edition).

³ *Der Skepticismus Montaigne's*, p. 17.

⁴ Cf. e.g. Bouillier, *Histoire de la Philosophie Cartésienne*, i. p. 20: 'C'est dans l'Apologie de Rémond de Sébondè qu'est, pour ainsi dire, ramassé le scepticisme tout entier de Montaigne. Là il reproduit toutes les objections des sceptiques avec une verve, avec une malice, et une perversité incomparables; là sous prétexte de défendre la raison et la foi, il ose tout dire contre la raison, il ose tout insinuer contre la foi.'

⁵ Bayle St. John's *Montaigne the Essayist*, ii. p. 95.

wholesale doubt of that philosophy, rather than for the partial scepticism of other schools, *e.g.* the Academic. This must always be regarded therefore as the culminating proof of Montaigne's scepticism. And a clearer admission of his own unbelief, short of the open profession which his character and circumstances alike forbade, it would be impossible to desire.¹ 'The Academics,' says he, 'admitted a certain partiality of judgment. . . . The Pyrrhonian is more bold and also somewhat more likely; for this academic inclination . . . what is it other than a recognition of some more apparent truth in this than in that? If our understanding be capable of the form, lineaments, gait, and face of truth, it might as well see it entire as by halves, springing and imperfect. This appearance of likelihood, which makes them rather take the left hand than the right, augments it: multiply this ounce of verisimilitude that turns the scales to a hundred, to a thousand ounces; it will happen in the end that the balance will itself close the controversy, and determine one choice, one entire truth. But why do they suffer themselves to incline to and be swayed by verisimilitude, if they know not the truth?' etc., etc. This is precisely the argument which we shall find Bishop Huet applied to the Cartesian doubt; and in my judgment, nothing can be more conclusive. Even if this argument, of which I have quoted but a portion, stood alone in the *Essais*, I should regard it as the ratiocination of a man who was in reality, whatever his profession might be, a genuine and unmitigated skeptic. That historians have relied on these utterances as overt proofs of unbelief can occasion no surprise, the surprise would have been justified, if, after such an admission, the final verdict were deemed uncertain.

Montaigne's philosophy is therefore *ipso teste* Pyrrhonic skepticism, as real and unadulterated, bating a slight tincture of Christianity, as we have it in the pages of Sextos Empeirikos himself. Truth does not exist for man, or, if it exists, it is undiscoverable. This is the conviction (if it might be so called) of his reason: it is also the persuasion and even desire of his feelings. Montaigne does not wish to *possess* truth. In common with most skeptics, he considers enquiry better than acquisition; search preferable to discovery. He

¹ In a note to his excellent article on Montaigne in the *Nouvelle Biographie Generale*, M. Joubert remarks: 'On a fait un Montaigne chretien, on ferait un Montaigne païen, un Montaigne epicurien; stoicien, etc. Ce n'est pas l'homme d'une croyance ou d'une secte qui se peint dans les *Essais*; c'est l'homme *ondoyant et divers*, qui s'y reflète dans toutes ses diversités et ses contradictions; mais une lecture attentive du chapitre intitulé Apologie de Raymond Sebonde laisse peu de doute sur le fond de la Pensée de l'auteur.' See also by all means Sainte Beuve's lively analysis of this chapter in volume ii. of his *Port-Royal*, p. 430, etc., etc.

relates the story of Demokritus found in Plutarch,¹ to illustrate the indignation a genuine philosopher might feel at being cheated of his search by an unwelcome 'find.' The story is interesting as illustrative of one of the less observed causes of skepticism. 'Demokritus having eaten figs² at his table that tasted of honey fell presently to considering with himself whence they should derive their unusual sweetness; and, to be satisfied in it, was about to rise from the table to see the place whence the figs had been gathered; which his maid observing, and having understood the cause, smilingly told him that he need not trouble himself about that, for she had put them into a vessel in which there had been honey. He was vexed at this discovery, and complained that she had deprived him of the occasion of this enquiry, and robbed his curiosity of matter to work upon. "Go thy way," said he, "thou hast done me an injury; but for all that, I will seek out the cause as if it were natural"; and would willingly have found out some true reason for a false and imaginary effect.'³ Montaigne, like Demokritus, is a genuine untiring enquirer. An universe of solved problems, or in which human faculties were quite equal to the solution, wherein, therefore, no *Essais* could have been indited on the numberless diversities and incongruities of all existing things, would have been insupportable to Montaigne. He speaks in terms of mingled contempt and impatience of those human fools who are for ever shouting forth their εἴρηκα's, though happily his own philosophy has long ago enabled him to appraise such pretensions at their true worth.

(3) The mode in which Montaigne discusses some of the main doctrines of Christianity, must, I think, also be included under the more manifest evidences of his skepticism. The dogmas peculiar to his religion he does not discuss; and except incidentally, never mentions. Both immortality and miracles, as widespread beliefs independent of any Christian origin, he treats at some length, and in either case in the approved manner of heathen philosophy. Of immortality he says, in effect precisely what Pomponazzi did. 'As a Christian, I believe; as a philosopher, I do not.' He accepts it on the *ipse dixit* of revelation, but considers it unproved, and unproveable by the reason. 'Let us,' says he, 'ingenuously confess that God alone has dictated it to us, and faith; for 'tis no lesson of Nature and our own reason.'⁴ He continues in a strain in which a superficial reader may be unable to decide whether genuine faith, or philosophic irony is the more predominant: 'whoever shall consider man impartially

¹ *Sympos.*, lib. i. quæst. x., Reiske, vol. viii. p. 484.

² The word is σίκνον, cucumber or gourd seed.

³ Hazlitt, Trans., p. 235.

and without flattery, will see in him no efficacy or faculty that relishes of anything *but death and earth*. The more we give, and confess to owe, and render, to God, we do it with the greater Christianity,' which is surely nothing else but an expansion of Tertullian's well known *Credo, quia absurdum*. The sentiment may be admissible in the mouth of a devotee. As an utterance of Montaigne's, it needs no qualification.

His treatment of miracles is a still more notable example of his skeptical equivoque. His ordinary point of view did not permit an explicit denial of them; even had his character and the circumstances of the case appeared to justify such a denial. Moreover, he himself confesses, as we have seen, to a keen and not over fastidious appetite for the sensational and marvellous. Hence, neither his philosophic principles nor his inclinations were in favour of rejecting miracles on mere *à priori* grounds. He speaks, in one place, with contempt of the presumption and rashness of discrediting all such marvels in a lump for the reason that we are unable to comprehend them.¹ But for his own developed views on the subject, we must refer to the 11th chapter of the 3rd Book. In this remarkable chapter he complains of the compulsion to which his intellect was sometimes subjected by a popular demand of belief in uncertain marvels. In such cases, says our essayist 'I find that almost throughout we should say "There is no such thing;" and should myself often make use of this answer; but I dare not, for they cry, "It is a defect produced from ignorance and weakness of understanding;" and I am forced for the most part to juggle for company and prate of frivolous and idle subjects, which I don't believe a single word of.' Then, after instancing some modern miracles, and pointing out their abnormal development from trifling causes, and their enhancement by distance of time and space, he proceeds, 'To this very hour, all these miracles and strange events have concealed themselves from me. I have never seen a greater miracle or monster in the world than myself.' In another sentence the germ of Hume's argument is apparent. 'How much more natural and likely do I find it, that two men should lie, than that one man in twelve hours' time should fly with the wind from east to west;' and sums up his observations on this subject in the following words: 'Methinks a man is pardonable in disbelieving a miracle, as much at least as he can divert and elude the verification of it by ways other than marvellous; and I am of St. Augustine's opinion, that tis better to lean towards doubt than assurance in things hard to prove and dangerous to believe.'²

¹ Hazlitt, Trans. p. 77.

² Hazlitt, Trans. p. 498.

Having now touched upon both the implicit and the more explicit evidences of Montaigne's skepticism, I will note briefly what seem to me the motive principles, which influenced and directed his tendencies in this respect.

When I said at the beginning of my paper that the unavowed object of Montaigne's *Essays* is toleration, I meant that this is the logical and only practical outcome of his reasonings. Grant him the premisses which he assumes, and fixity or uniformity of belief is utterly chimerical. It is in complete antagonism to all the laws and forces of Nature. Montaigne was therefore above everything else a lover of freedom. Not that he was prepared to dare or sacrifice anything in her behalf: of that kind of affection either for persons or things he was constitutionally incapable. The liberty he loved, that which he sincerely wished all men to enjoy, was liberty of thought, and within certain limits, of its expression in word and act. Notwithstanding his friendship for La Boëtie he suppressed for a time the Essay of that ardent young republican on Voluntary Servitude, and misrepresented its purport. Montaigne had in truth no wish, even if he had the power, to overturn existing authorities in Church and State. He would rather go occasionally to court and play the courtier, or pay a visit to Rome and kiss the Pope's toe. The utmost he would have done would have been to limit the power of Pope and King to persecute their subjects for trifling eccentricities of belief. Not that he loved either Huguenots or Lutherans. They were poor ignorant wretches, full of convictions and certainties of the most vigorous and overmastering kind, for which they were not only willing but eager to sacrifice life. It was hardly to be expected that a fastidious Epicuræan like Montaigne could have any kindly feeling for such a combination of ignorance and dogmatism. He would have no concession made to their absurd crotchets in respect of truth.¹ Still he was in favour of liberty of conscience; and thought they had better be left alone.

Writers on Montaigne have pointed out that what seems his skepticism, is in some cases but the effect of his love of liberty, and his impetuous disregard of all restraints. To some extent this is true: Montaigne is not unlike a full-blooded courser, to whom the mere sight of a barrier awakens an irrepressible desire to surmount it. Hence his liberty both of thought and action sometimes degenerates into licence. Nor is he unconscious of this infirmity, although he does not think it needs an apology. Thus he tells us, apropos of liberty of speech, that he takes the liberty to say all that he dares to

¹ Book i. chap. xxvi. with which compare Book ii. chap. xix. 'on Liberty of Conscience.'

do; and we might rejoin, if we accept his own account of himself, that he took the still greater liberty to do all that he dared to say. His primary rule of conduct was Nature, her laws, dictates and requirements; and Nature herself was, as he said, unbounded. Hence for mere social regulations, restraints born of custom and the usages of civilization, he affected a supreme disdain. In a sentence, which marks the genuine skeptical enquirer, almost more than any other in the *Essais*, he says 'I so love freedom of will and action, that were I interdicted the remotest corners of the Indies, I should live a little more uneasy thereat:' words which when duly applied give the key-note both to his mental and moral character. He would even make such an unlimited freedom a primary consideration in education. In his celebrated chapter on this topic, Book i. 25, he says, 'Let the tutor make his pupil examine and thoroughly sift every thing he reads. Nothing must come into his head on the mere basis of authority. The principles of Aristotle are none to him, any more than those of the Stoics and Epicuræans. . . . Let the diversity of opinions be propounded to and laid before him, he will himself choose, if he be able; if not, let him remain in doubt.'¹

'Che, non men che saver, dubbiar m' aggrata.'²

For not less than knowledge, doubt to me is grateful.

Ritter and other historians have made Montaigne's views of Nature the ground-principle of his philosophy. To a considerable extent this is correct. There is no doubt that he was thoroughly permeated by the new Nature-worship, which entered so largely and with such overpowering influence into the advanced culture of the period. Not that he ever shared the sublime intoxication of such men as Giordano Bruno, Vanini and Campanella. His regard for Nature was not

¹ Hazlitt, Trans. p. 62.

² Dante, *Inferno*, Canto xi. 93. The same preference for healthy and natural skepticism to unwholesome, artificial or false knowledge, is expressed by Erasmus and Lord Bacon. Montaigne, it will be observed, agrees with Thelwall, who in discussing the question of education with Coleridge, thought that the native soil should not be prejudiced in favour of roses and strawberries. Coleridge, *Table Talk*, p. 105. But unfortunately for Coleridge's rejoinder, 'native soils' are more often prejudiced by ill applied culture in favour of the thorns and thistles of dogma than in that of the 'roses and strawberries' of truth and liberty. Montaigne's views of education seem to have been derived, in the first instance from his father's Italian method and his own early training; though he may have been indebted for a confirmation of them to Rabelais. Comp. Dr. F. A. Arnstädt, *Francois Rabelais und sein Traite d'Éducation*: Leipzig, 1872, especially chap. x. p. 168. Rabelais and Montaigne were followed in their advocacy of uncramming, practical, character-developing education, by Charron, Locke and Rousseau. See Dr. Arnstädt, loc. cit.

like theirs, that of a mistress to be passionately loved, the consecrated object of devotion and worship, sometimes of rather a rhapsodical and incoherent kind, but that of a queen, to be distantly respected, and intelligently served. Her law is supreme in all matters, whether of speculation or of practice. Conformity with her dictates is the sole requirement which can be demanded of humanity, which therefore makes obedience to lesser authorities of inferior obligation. As is usual with most of his views, he pushes his idea of nature-supremacy to excess; especially when he employs it as a vantage-ground whence he can attack the dogmatism and presumption of mankind, or ridicule the vices and follies of civilization. Not only does he pronounce the barbarous yet simple and manly state of the South American savages superior to the polished but effete civilization of his own time, but even their most offensive practices, cannibalism, *e.g.*, appeared less worthy of repugnance than the racks and torments, the worrying with wild beasts, which Montaigne himself had witnessed, not only, as he says, 'amongst inveterate and mortal enemies, but amongst neighbours and fellow-citizens, and what is worse, under colour of piety and religion.'¹ Moreover, he questions the superiority of man over the lower animals; professing to find in the latter, not only in germ, but in a certain amount of development, most human excellencies, mental as well as physical. Even those emotions which seem peculiarly human are, in his opinion, probably shared by the brute creation. An elephant, *e.g.* has evinced religious emotion, dogs have shown fidelity, lions have manifested gratitude, etc., etc. Although the authority on which these marvels are based is not high, it is interesting to find Montaigne and other skeptics anticipating speculations with which the physical science of our own day has made us familiar.

Before I close my paper, I must say a word on Montaigne's religion. Like his views on other subjects, it may fairly be described as 'an unknown quantity.' His constitutional temperament made him averse to novelties,² especially of a vigorous and trenchant character, either in religion or politics; and the events of his time and country were hardly calculated to lessen that aversion. His motto would probably have been 'Quieta non movere.' The dislike he occasionally manifests to the sectaries, is in my opinion, easily accounted for. As a rule they were further removed from that standard of tolerant indifference which Montaigne regarded as best

¹ Hazlitt, Trans. p. 91.

² See his letter to his wife, Hazlitt, p. 640. 'And in truth, novelty has cost so dear to this poor State (and yet I know not whether it may not still cost more), that in all cases and places, I wash my hands of it.'

in all dubious matters. Hence he would have felt much more at home in the society of scholarly and semi-skeptical cardinals than in that of Huguenot or Lutheran ministers. What he would have said to a freer sect which would have combined simplicity of belief and worship with genuine scholarship and scientific research, we have no means of knowing. That his instinctive love of liberty must have received a shock from the massacre of Saint Bartholomew, I cannot doubt. But we must remember that the religious intolerance of the ruling powers may have been made to wear the semblance of stern political necessity,¹ while that so frequently evinced by the Huguenots was merely the expression of fervid religious conviction—a very different matter in Montaigne's estimation.

For myself I have little doubt that Montaigne evinced, towards the end of his life, an increasing appreciation of the simplicity and undogmatic character of the Christianity actually founded by Christ, though with his usual dualism he contrived to combine this feeling with a sentimental regard for the imposing ecclesiasticism which had been its actual embodiment for so many centuries. Thus he not only prefers the Lord's Prayer above all other forms of devotion,² but thinks that to many men it might suffice; at least he confesses that he uses no other. He is also convinced that the very essence of Christianity is in its ethical purity; and therefore that its best dogmas consist of good actions and a holy life.³ This was, as we shall find, that particular phase of Montaigne's teaching that was taken up and elaborated by his disciple Charron; and the intercourse of these thinkers during the last three years of Montaigne's life (1589–1592) was well-nigh continuous and unbroken. Like Charron, too, he expresses an unbounded contempt for the theory that orthodox belief is superior to virtuous practice, as a qualification for attaining the rewards of a future life. He relates the story of Diogenes, who, when pressed by a priest to accept his religion on condition of the reward of eternal felicity, indignantly answered, 'What! thou wouldest have me believe that Agesilaus and Epaminondas, who were so great men, shall be miserable, and that thou who art but a calf, and canst do nothing to purpose, shalt be happy because thou art a priest?' In the same direction points his commendation of the

¹ Gabriel Naudé, a free-thinker like Montaigne (resembling him also in other respects), expressly defended the massacre of St. Bartholomew as a political necessity. See his *Considerations Politiques sur les Coups d'Etat*, Rome, 1639, chap. iii. The circumstance is chiefly remarkable as proving how little the principles of freedom and toleration were then understood even by their professed defenders.

² Book i. chap. lvi.

³ Book ii. xii. Comp. Hazlitt, p. 201.

Emperor Julian; for he by no means allows that his great moral and intellectual qualities are rendered nugatory by his renunciation of that form of Christianity presented for his acceptance. I am aware that this admiration for morality, and his assertion of it as the main point of religion, assumes a curious appearance when contrasted with Montaigne's confessedly lax life; but we must bear in mind that, in an intellect so completely dualistic, the region of speculation and sentimental approval might be widely demarcated from that of positive practice. Besides, Montaigne was so completely the creature of occasional impulse, that no mere '*lex vivendi*' would suffice to turn him 'from the career of his humour.' What indeed could have been expected of a man who thus describes what he is pleased, I suppose ironically, to call his 'virtue.' 'My virtue is a virtue, or rather an innocence, casual and accidental. If I had been born of a more irregular complexion (*i.e.* with more vicious tendencies), I am afraid I should have made sorry work of it; for I never observed any great stability in my soul to resist passions were they never so little vehement.'¹ Montaigne, it is clear, was well qualified to become an inmate of Rabelais' Abbey of Thelemites. Little worthy excuse, however, can be proffered for Montaigne's ethical weakness. He was endowed with so much perspicacity, that no man saw more readily or fully the outcome whether of any given speculation or practice. He also possessed sufficient self-assertion as to be independent of his environment. The only institution capable to a certain extent of influencing him was the Church; but from this source Montaigne found no encouragement to harmonize his life with his religious convictions. On the other hand, the dualism he found in himself he discovered to exist in the Church. Even if the Church had not suggested and created it, it derived from its sanction and example a distinct and infallible authority.

He frequently remarks on the hollowness of the religious profession of his time, especially among ecclesiastics. He notices *e.g.* the prevalent opinion that the profession of religion by men of parts was only pretended. When at Rome, too, he observes that the Pope and cardinals are chatting pleasantly with each other during the celebration of High Mass, and remarks that the rites were more magnificent than devotional. He is also careful to note how gross immorality was occasionally allied, among the Italian peasantry, with the most fervent devotion. He does not apparently think these inconsistencies worthy of reprehension; though in his *Essais* he more than once discusses hypocrisy in the tone of the austere moralists. They are merely interesting eccentricities, to be noted in his diary, as any

¹ Bk. ii. chap. ii. Hazlitt, p. 195.

other peculiarity or noteworthy phenomenon. But he does not seem to be aware that the combination in his own life of immorality with superstitious religious observances is every whit as incongruous, and compared with the conduct of peasantry, much less defensible. Considered as the practical issue of a dualism which separates theology entirely from all secular speculation, Montaigne's conduct affords no doubt an unsatisfactory comment on the principle of 'twofold truth.'

On the whole, little can be said on the affirmative side of that frequent theme of French essayists—the Christianity, or religion, of Montaigne. For while he recognized the ethical purity of Christianity, and preferred the simpler to the more complex stages in its historical evolution, there is little to demonstrate his appreciation of Christianity as a religion superior to all others. The ground of his Christianity he expressly tells us, is geographical—the accident of his birth-place. The same accident might have made him a Brahmin or Buddhist, a Mussulman or Protestant; and he contemplates all such eventualities with the most philosophical indifference. Besides, he regarded all beliefs as capable of being determined by the arbitrary choice of those who adopt them. In his own words, 'many people make themselves believe that they believe'; and such an argument would hardly tend to demonstrate the exclusive sanctity of any established creed.

Some explanation too, of Montaigne's aberration from morality must be found in his definition and estimate of Nature. I have admitted the influence on his intellectual growth of Raymund of Sabiende's work. Now it is evident that the definition of Nature as a revelation prior and superior to that of Scripture, might in many cases assume a most mischievous aspect: that it did so in Montaigne's own case seems to me to admit of little doubt. Herein, too, our skeptic was not only pursuing a track set before him by a venerated teacher, but was in harmony with the general spirit of the time. As we have seen, one of the most salient products of the Renaissance was a substitution of natural dictates for theological dogmas. This feature is distinctly marked in the *Essais*. Montaigne frequently mentions Nature on terms of equality with God, and I need not point out the extreme licence such a standpoint might be made to justify.

As a *per contra* to these indications of skepticism, spéculative and practical, Montaigne's fellow-Romanists and defenders urge his attitude of professed obedience and submission to the Church. They string together the orthodox passages of his *Essais*, or his translation of the *Natural Theology*. They gravely remind us of his regular attendances at Mass, his kissing the Pope's toe, his pilgrimage to Loretto (when he happened to be in the neighbourhood), his devoutly crossing

himself whenever he yawned, his expressions of disdain for Huguenots and Neologists of all kinds, his exemplary death, etc.; but I confess that the combined force of all these arguments in proving Montaigne an orthodox Romanist does not seem to me very great. Like so many of the illustrious characters formed by the Renaissance, Montaigne was in reality a learned and skeptical pagan. His warmest sympathies, personal and literary, were given to the giants of antiquity. Despising, like Machiavelli, the men and the thought of his own time, nothing gave him so much enjoyment as retiring to his study and communing with his beloved ancients. Then he forgot, for the time being, the religious wars that desolated his country, the tortures and cruelties perpetrated by Kings and Popes in the holy name of religion, the insolent and oppressive dogma-mongering that characterized all the churches of the time, Huguenot no less than Romanist, and banished tolerance, mutual sympathy from human existence. That Montaigne was not a Christian in the ecclesiastical sense of the term I am fully persuaded; but I am far from supposing, as some writers have done, that he was a conscious hypocrite. He undoubtedly possessed as strong a sense of natural religion as was compatible with his wayward character, and he intermingled with it just as much observance of ecclesiastical rites as his birth in a Romanist country seemed to demand. That he was susceptible of religious impressions and feelings many pages of his *Essais* fully prove. That they were lasting, or were allowed to become obtrusive, his character forbids us to acknowledge. As to the quiet composure with which he met death, that seems to me to harmonize with the philosophic serenity with which he encountered the changes and chances of life; and has little effect either in demonstrating his Christianity or disproving his skepticism. The scene of his death-bed proves little more than the success that attended his efforts to imitate the imperturbable calm which he so much admired in ancient heroes and Stoics, *e.g.* Sokrates, Cato and Seneca. Such at least is my own opinion. For those who are inclined to make large inferences from this and other transient phases in Montaigne's life as to the strength of his Christianity, I would recommend the adoption of the rule suggested by Ste Beuve, *viz.* to estimate Montaigne by the standard of value he himself would attach to the ratiocination; no readier method could be suggested for proving their inconclusiveness. Indeed, in the final resort, we cannot do better than suspend our own judgments and accept Montaigne's own estimate of himself. His self-delineation as '*divers et ondoyant*' has long attained in this respect the efficacy of a sacramental formula. No phrase could better describe that combination of waywardness and mobility that constituted his character, and with the additional remark

that they indicate in a thinker a peculiarity born of skepticism, we must allow them to stand as the final verdict on Montaigne.

No account of Montaigne's skepticism would be complete that took no cognizance of the unique position occupied by his *Essais* in the history of French Literature and Free-thought. All works of skepticism have, as we know, a peculiarly awakening force; for the reason that all enquiry, as Abelard remarked, starts from doubt. Hence, in the whole of French literature the two works that attained the most ready and lasting celebrity were Montaigne's *Essais* and Descartes' *Discourse on Method*; and of these the former has had by far the greatest influence. No work written in the language has so much right to the appellation of 'classic,' none has permeated so fully not only the thought and literature, but also the style and language of the most *spirituelle* nation in Europe. Nor is this to be wondered at. It is the outcome of all that is most distinctive in French literature from its very earliest commencement. It represents the *verve* and *bonhomie*, the witty insolence and audacious candour that characterized the French Fabliaux of the middle ages; and which was subsequently reproduced by such prominent writers as La Fontaine and Voltaire. As the chief product of the French Renaissance it introduced to the French people and their tongue the many-sided wisdom of old Greece and Rome. In contributing to this popular knowledge of the humanities, the *Essais* effected more than any work in French literature. Montaigne's perpetual quotations from classical writers and his pithy comments on them, though sneered at by Malebranche and others, had the effect of a collection of 'elegant extracts' from all the greatest writers of antiquity, at a time when classical knowledge, as a part of popular education, was in its infancy. The French seigneur in his chateau, the merchant in his office, the mechanic in his shop, might catch a flavour of them from this 'Breviary of good fellows,' as Cardinal Duperron styled the *Essais*. Nor was this all. To the professional student of classical lore, the lawyer or the cleric, Montaigne's *Essais* taught discrimination or its rudiments, in ancient learning; for, as Villemain has pointed out, Montaigne is in France the father of classical criticism—'the great critic of the sixteenth century.' In his well-known chapter on Books (ii. chap. x.), he gives under the form of his own literary preferences a discriminative judgment of the writers of antiquity which, for the most part subsequent criticism has confirmed. But especially was Montaigne the purveyor to his countrymen of the skeptical thought of the ancients; for we must by no means measure the extent of his obligations, particularly as to skepticism, by his actual quotations. Indeed, on all subjects Montaigne was better at borrowing than repaying.

Hence the student who comes to the study of the *Essais* after a wide course of classical reading, is surprised, not at the number of Montaigne's quotations, but at their fewness. As you remember, he apologizes in one place for his dislike to quotations. Some might suppose such an apology unneeded or ironical, but in point of fact it is well grounded. The unacknowledged plagiarisms in the *Essais* are far in excess of their admitted borrowing. This is especially the case where the writer has a doubtful reputation. To take one instance; he often cites Sextos Empeirikos, though generally without naming him. Indeed, I regard Montaigne as having first introduced the great legislator of Greek skepticism into the French language; just as, according to Bayle, Gassendi introduced him in Latin to the learned. It may easily have been, however, that Montaigne was indebted for his own knowledge of Sextos to Henry Stephens' translation of the *Hypotyposes*, which was published in 1562. At any rate all the more important of Sextos's arguments may be found in the *Essais*, and not unfrequently whole portions of the *Hypotyposes* are discovered to have been transferred bodily into its pages;¹ and these plagiarisms, though inserted in Montaigne's usual irregular manner, are yet selected with so much skill that they would of themselves enable any diligent reader to gain a fair knowledge of the distinctive qualities of Greek skepticism. Nor is it only the ancient skeptics whom Montaigne thus lays under contribution. He is equally prodigal of excerpts and reasonings from those nearer his own time. Thus Cornelius Agrippa's *De Vanitate* appears to have supplied him with occasional arguments, though Montaigne never mentions him.¹ As thus summarizing the reasonings of most free-thinkers on the subject, and presenting them in a popular form, Montaigne must be regarded as the father of French skepticism. All subsequent free-thinkers of his own nation have borrowed from him more or less, though in fair requital of his own plagiarisms, not always acknowledging their obligations. A natural result of this position is that the *Essais* may be regarded as a kind of barometer of French skepticism. It has gone up or come down in popular estimation just as free-thought has been in the ascendant or the contrary—both 'rise' and 'fall,' being also denoted by the number of its published editions. Immediately on their first publication, contemporaneous as it was with the full tide of the Renaissance free-thought, they achieved a considerable popularity, which continued till about the middle of the following century. Then,

¹ This is especially true of portions of the Apology chapter.

² *E.g.* in his account of the diversities of opinion as to the seat of the soul, Book ii. chap. xii. he seems to have copied Agrippa, *De Vanitate*, etc., chap. lii.

by the united opposition of Catholics, Port-Royalists, Pietists and Philosophers of the Malebranche school, the *Essais* receded to 'zero.' But in the eighteenth century, under the reign of the Encyclopædists, they again rose rapidly, until they stood at a higher point of prosperity than they had yet attained. With the fall of the Revolution and the rise of the first Empire, there was another declension in the value of the *Essais*; while a final upward movement set in with the general awakening of interest in her older writers which commenced in France during the third decade of the present century, and which still continues. At present Montaigne and his immortal work stand higher, both in popular and literary estimation, than at any former period, as is amply testified by the recent literature which has grown up around them.

But Montaigne's services to the free culture of France has not been confined to purveying her skepticism. There is no subject on which succeeding writers have not copied him; and as the contents of the *Essais* are of a multifarious, encyclopædic character, Montaigne has long occupied the position of a kind of general referee on most points of literature and moral philosophy.¹ To enumerate all the great names in French literature who have borrowed from the *Essais* would be to reckon up all their greatest thinkers and writers. Charron's *Sagesse* is only a systematic reconstruction of some of the *Essais*. Le Vayer borrowed from him, though without acknowledgment, as well as imitated servilely his method, frequency of classical citations, etc. Pascal, while he abused him, was not ashamed of an occasional theft from his pages. Of himself, together with other of the French 'moralists'—thus termed one might suppose more from their 'moralizing' than their 'morals'—Montaigne is the parent. The epigrammatic cynicism and misanthropy of Rochefoucauld, the wise sententiousness of La Bruyère—their desultory method of teaching by disjointed maxims and pithy sentences, are derived from the *Essais*. To the great dramatists of France—Corneille, Molière, Racine, especially the second—Montaigne has furnished both thought and language. Indeed his influence on these was so powerful that in one respect it may be accounted mischievous; for there is little doubt that the classical enthusiasm awoke by the *Essais* tended to repress the native originality of these writers by inducing a slavish deference to classical standards. Coming to later times, Montaigne in the eighteenth century is the paramount teacher of France. Rousseau

¹ Comp. on this point Nisard, *Histoire de la Litt. de la France*, vol. i., and M. Leveaux's *Étude sur les Essais de Montaigne*. The principal interest of the latter work consists in the parallelisms adduced between Montaigne and other authors.

took from the *Essais* his method of education, and much else; though, characteristically, without a thought of acknowledgment. The encyclopædists and free-thinkers of the same period plundered the skeptical portions of the *Essais* without scruple; while during the present century few of the eminent litterateurs of France could be named who have not been indebted for somewhat of manner or matter to him, whom the chief of them has eulogised as ‘the wisest Frenchman that ever lived.’

A passing word must also be given to the influence exercised by the *Essais* on the style and diction of the French language. Like his book, Montaigne’s style is—himself. In completest harmony with his versatility, nay, its very reflection is the careless, informal character of his diction. Never was instrument more happily attuned to the moods and requirements of the player. The variety of his themes, his discursive method of treating them; the complete absence of anything like plan, system, uniformity—all these are reflected and expressed by the easy, gracefule, happy-go-lucky style of his *Essais*. He tells us that he waited upon accident for his themes and for the ideas they suggested, we might also add, and for the language, in which they were expressed. He took no more pains to study the due arrangement of words in a sentence than the orderly sequence of thoughts in an Essay. What came first to hand, whether thought, quotation, or verbal phrase, was mostly adopted. Provided the words clearly indicated his meaning he was fully satisfied; and the remarkable feature of it is that this accidental language should be so perfect; that with such an unartificial construction of sentences, the style should be so limpid and clear, that it is not only impossible to mistake the author’s meaning, but even to imagine any words by which that meaning could be better conveyed; so that it has been truly remarked: ‘Montaigne is the man of all others who knows least what he is going to say, and knows best how to say it.’¹ But while acknowledging this *naïveté* as the distinguishing characteristic of Montaigne’s language, it is by no means the only one. His style is varied, flexible and elastic; it partakes largely of the ‘*divers et ondoyant*’ character of the author. He has his grave as well as his pleasant moods; can tune his instrument to the slow solemn music of religious and didactic exposition as well as to the wilder dithyrambs of intellectual restiveness and immoral licence. This is doubtless the secret, in part, of his immense influence upon all subsequent French literature. Every student finds in the *Essais* not only the subject matter of his choice but the diction best fitted to express it. Char-

¹ *Grim Diderot Correspondence* (Ed. Garnier), i. p. 102.

acteristically, he himself did not value his style any more than he did his thoughts. He calls it antiquated, provincial, Gascon; says that when he writes he puts away from him the company and remembrance of books, because he found that that they interfered with his own 'form,' and in the case of good authors depressed his courage.¹ But we must here, as elsewhere, make allowance for Montaigne's excessive self-depreciation, and his humorous exaggeration of personal peculiarities. His admitted carefulness to preserve the individuality of his style seems to indicate that he deemed it worth preserving; and it is worthy of remark that the author whom of all French prose writers he most eulogises, possesses that 'simple and natural' style which comes nearest to his own, *i.e.* Amyot, the translator of Plutarch. Nor has Montaigne's incomparable language been without effect in the diffusion of his skepticism. Every philosophy—like a fine lady—is largely dependant for 'social success' on its dress, style and mode of presentation; and this is especially the case when Nature has not been lavish in her original gifts. Hence skepticism, not being blessed with very prepossessing features or beauty of form, has always been largely indebted for the measure of its popularity to the arts of the literary *coiffeur* and *modiste*; and Montaigne's seductive graces of style has invested his philosophy with such attractions that, in my opinion, Pyrrhonism has never been so well dressed or so artistically presented as in the *Essais*. As a teacher of philosophical suspense he is even superior to Sextos Empeirikos; his quality of 'ondoiment,' his *dégagé* turn, the absence of anything like earnestness or intention, the picturesque disorder of his thoughts, befit the theme better than the systematic purposeness of the great skeptic.

This may possibly be the reason why so many of his critics, especially those of recent times, have attempted to minimize Montaigne's skepticism. It is surely an insufficient conception of it that would make it the mere reaction against the credulity and superstition of his own time. For my part I can conceive no age or environment in which Montaigne would not have been a skeptic, preferring the inquisitive suspense of Pyrrhonism to the partial doubt of the Academics. To a man who wraps himself up in a resolute '*Je ne sçais*,' all times, places, circumstances, philosophies, creeds are alike. Nor can I agree with those who forget Montaigne's moral laxity in estimating the extent of his free-thought. Thus, an historian of French literature² has said: 'Le scepticisme de Montaigne proclame la liberté de

¹ Comp. also his well-known words, 'J'écris mon livre à peu d'hommes et à peu d'années; s'il c'eut été une matière de durée, il l'eût fallu commettre à un langage plus ferme.'

² Nisard, vol. i. p. 443.

la conscience et conserve saine et sauve la moralité des actions.' No doubt the words are true when spoken of the intent of the *Essais* and of the religious side of its author's twofold character; but regarded as a philosopher, it is just this absence of moral restraint—the powerlessness to resist any impulse, the inability to repent of his actions even when he recognized their error or unwisdom—that seems to me to set the seal on the extent and profundity of his skepticism. I am hence assured that skepticism was more to him than a mere speculative opinion. No! Montaigne's Pyrrhonism considered philosophically was complete and unqualified. It is the principal, if not the sole element in his character; the focus in which all his numerous mutabilities and inconsistencies meet. He sailed over the summer seas of knowledge and speculation, now before one wind, now before another, bound professedly for no particular port, careless of chart or compass, and only anxious to preserve his craft from striking on recognized rocks or grounding on unknown shallows—the very ideal, in short, of a skeptical voyage. I have already conceded that there is a religious aspect of his mind helping to form the complete "Charakterbild" of this Proteus, a kind of Sunday (and in my judgment forming the same proportion) in relation to his working days of philosophy and worldliness.

But after all, for us as students of French skepticism, Montaigne's importance lies in his own epoch. Himself and his *Essais* form the high-water mark of the free-thought of the French Renaissance. They promulgate its classical enthusiasm, its reverence for Nature, its rationalism and anti-sacerdotalism. Considered from this standpoint, it is not easy to exaggerate the services Montaigne and his work rendered to the cause of freedom and humanity, not only in France but in Europe. Amidst the terrible religious bigotry, the cruel civil wars, the persecutions, tortures, treacheries and crimes of the sixteenth century, it was at least some credit, and required no small courage, to rear up a small temple dedicated to philosophy, toleration and mental freedom, which none of these discordant influences were able to penetrate,¹ and though the high priest of that temple was not a model of religious sanctity or of moral purity, and though its rites were apt to degenerate into licence, still these excesses were in part only the inevitable extravagances which oftentimes accompany a new faith and new hopes—the natural reaction against a long period of dogmatic tyranny and mental oppression, for which,

¹ On this relation of Montaigne to the social disturbances and civil wars of the sixteenth century, see some eloquent remarks in Saint René Taillandier's essay, 'Montaigne in Relation to the Literature of the Sixteenth Century,' *Revue de Deux Mondes*, vol. xx. p. 510.

therefore, these evil agencies are primarily responsible. The first outburst of liberty, among a race degenerated by long slavery, is not generally marked by sobriety of thought, propriety of behaviour, or by spontaneous submission to wholesome social and religious restraints.

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ARUNDEL. On the whole, Doctor, I agree with your paper. Montaigne does seem to me precisely that Protean combination of skepticism, cynicism, credulity and immorality, you have delineated. Of all modern thinkers he is *facile princeps* in the attributes of instability, and dread of every sort of restraint. In the latter respect he reminds one of Bacon's 'humorous minds,' which are so sensible of every restriction as they will go neere, to think their girdles and garters to be bonds and shackles. . . . You cannot be sure of his sincerity even when he seems most unreserved and explicit. It might be fairly open to argument whether his genuine convictions should not be interpreted in the inverse ratio of his ostensible professions.

TREVOR. So his skepticism would become the ironical expression of secret but firm conviction; as in the popular estimate of Sokrates. You would in such a case have no difficulty in proving Montaigne a dogmatist and an orthodox believer. The process of course is both artificial and misleading. Tying a weather vane in the direction you wish does not tell you which way the wind blows. In this respect Montaigne is like Sokrates, a conspicuous instance of the power of irony, Nescience, and intellectual many-sidedness in enabling men to cherish in reserve and seclusion their favourite sentiments and convictions far from the prying gaze of their fellow men.

MISS LEYCESTER. Admit irony in this sense, and we might have a pendant to Rochefoucauld's maxim: As language was given to men to conceal their thoughts, so creeds were devised by men to hide their beliefs. But frankly, Dr. Trevor, I think it is you who have been tying the weather vane in order to predicate a definite direction of a wind blowing from every quarter. We are all agreed, I think, that Montaigne truly describes himself as '*divers et ondoyant*'; but the fact seems

to me at least partially to disprove his skepticism. If he was really so inconstant, why should we lay more stress on his skepticism than on any other phase of his many-sided character? The *Essais* should in my opinion be taken as a whole; and as constituting what Montaigne himself calls his *universal* being. But thus regarded they do not impress one more with their skepticism or their cynicism than they do with their strong common sense, or their occasional orthodoxy, or any other of their innumerable qualities. The *Essais* is like a dish prepared of many various materials, and flavoured with many condiments, but all so harmoniously blended that it is impossible to say of any one ingredient or flavour that it predominates over the rest.

HARRINGTON. Then instead of calling Montaigne a skeptic, you would, I presume, say that he was a cypher—a mere sign, of which nothing definitive could be asserted; or like the scholastic ‘substance,’ an imaginary entity in which qualities inhere.

MISS LEYCESTER. Not so; Montaigne represents the mutability of every man who has sufficient introspective insight to discern, and sufficient candour to acknowledge it. Pascal said of the *Essais* that he never opened them but he discovered himself, *i.e.* the image of his own mutations and inconsistencies. Introspection, you remember, led Sokrates to doubt his own identity; and to profess himself uncertain whether he were not a multiform serpent of Typhon; and Hamlet describes the result of his own self-analysis almost in the very words of Montaigne:—‘I am myself indifferent honest, but yet I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me: I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious, with more offences at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in.’

TREVOR. In some cases, no doubt, the different qualities in a composite character may be so evenly blended that not one is prominent above the rest; but Montaigne, in my judgment, is not one of them. That he had some settled convictions I have never denied. He was fully convinced, *e.g.* of the benefits of toleration, of the superiority of his favourite mode of education, of the necessity of religious and moral restraints for

ordinary folk, etc., etc.; but I still maintain that the ground principle of his intellectual character was skepticism; and that this is evidenced by his religion, his philosophy, his political conduct and his morality. Hence accepting your simile, I think that skeptical suspense, with its allied qualities of moderation, equanimity, etc., constitutes the preponderating flavour in his mental dish. . . . Besides, our investigation of skepticism considers it in relation to dogma. But the latter implies fixity, permanence, steadfastness; and a mind antagonistic to those qualities, *i.e.* wavering, doubtful, suspensive, not in action perhaps so much as in speculation, must needs be skeptical. Montaigne himself was at least clear-sighted enough to perceive that his waywardness and vacillation must needs bear a skeptical construction. You remember the beginning of the 3rd chapter of the 2nd Book: 'Si philosophe c'est doubter, comme ils disent, à plus forte raison niaiser et fantasquer, comme je fois, doit estre doubter.'

HARRINGTON. The point in Montaigne's character that most impresses me is what has been rightly called his Paganism. Setting aside a few casual remarks on Christian dogmas, enunciated with a coldness very unlike the ardour of his commendations of Pyrrhonism, there is nothing in the whole of his *Essays* but what a cultured heathen might have written. They might stand for scraps of Plutarch, Lucian or Theophrastus, or for fragments of letters by Pliny or Seneca. I have read the *Essais* pretty thoroughly, and I have been unable to find any allusion to the Founder of Christianity, or to its primary records.

TREVOR. Paganism was, of course, the atmosphere, if not the very life-blood of the Renaissance. When Roman pontiffs were themselves heathen—a combination of Bunyan's giants Pope and Pagan in a single Janus-like personality—it was not likely that minor personages would be uninfluenced by the prevailing passion for pagan culture. As to the other characteristic, it is common to all the literature of the period, theological as well as lay. The beginnings of Christianity, the personal character of the Founder, etc., had in fact long since passed, if not out of human knowledge, at least out of human consciousness, buried under the continual accretion of

ecclesiastical and dogmatic developments. Even Luther, and Calvin, notwithstanding their undoubted services to the cause of Christian freedom, contributed very little to direct men's attention to this the first and most essential aspect of Christianity. They too must needs systematize. From this point of view there is but little difference between Calvin's *Institutes* and the *Summa* of Aquinas.

ARUNDEL. Is there not a considerable parallelism, I do not mean altogether as to genius, although Montaigne was undoubtedly a poet, but as to character, temperament, etc., between Montaigne and Goethe? Both cold, unimpassioned intellects; both hiding a considerable amount of vanity under a semblance of indifference to human opinion; both loving freedom after a manner, but with a careless Epicuræanism which refused to hazard anything in her cause; both lovers of Nature and realistic in their conception and interpretation of her; both enamoured of inconstancy, for Montaigne confessed that in all subjects he felt 'the delights of changeable desire.'

'Da fühl ich die Freuden der wechselnden Lust.'

Allowing for differences in race and circumstances, the two men seem cast in nearly the same mould.

TREVOR. No doubt there are points of similarity, but Goethe had too much innate reserve to imitate Montaigne's outspoken and outrageous frankness. Compare for instance the reticence of the *Autobiography* with the excessive candour of the *Essais*. Goethe's general demeanour is that of a king on state occasions, conscious of being the observed of all observers. Montaigne, on the other hand, is like a performing clown or street-tumbler displaying his quaintest antics and postures to public gaze, and delighted when a more uncouth gambol than usual obtains its meed of public recognition and applause.

HARRINGTON. Montaigne's highest claim to complete skepticism appears to me to rest on his avowal that, like Lessing and others, he would rather always inquire than discover—start on a kind of Columbus-voyage, neither hoping nor expecting to see land—not that I think he felt much interest in any enterprise of the kind. By the bye, what a capital story

is that of Demokritus, leaving a simple solution of a problem which he knows to be true, to search for one more recondite, which, if it differs from the other, must needs be false. It is typical of, but hardly complimentary to, unlimited skepticism.

MISS LEYCESTER. Yet the same inordinate appetite for pure research may be merely the desire which possesses antiquaries of ascertaining frivolous and insignificant details. This temper was satirised in an amusing paper in *Ainsworth's Magazine* a few years ago. I chanced to come across the number one day last week, and the zeal of the antiquary appeared to resemble the inquiring fervour of the skeptic so much, that I copied part of it as an illustration of our subject.

DR. TREVOR. Let us have it by all means.

MISS LEYCESTER. (Reading from a pocket-book). 'An antiquary was engaged in carefully inspecting a large monument in a church. After he had copied the inscription, he turned to a by-stander:—

' "Do you happen to know, sir, anything of this family?"

' "Nothing, but what we read here; you perhaps failed to observe the line below the original inscription?"

' "Eh?—ah! so I did. Thank you, sir," and to the copy of the memorial were added the words: "The name is now extinct."

' Still the copyist did not seem content. "Extinct!" he muttered, and then he paused:—

' Suddenly he advanced close to the tablet, examined it all over, stooped down and scrutinized the under edge, looked along the side edges, and then fetched the pew opener's chair to stand upon, while he peeped upon the dusty top and into the grimy mouths of the guardian angels. Finally he descended and retreated slowly, his eyes still fixed on the monument, and murmured as he paced mournfully out of church,—

' "Well, I think they might as well have added the name of the stone-mason!"'

TREVOR.—A genuine enquirer! no doubt, impeded by no obstacles, and acknowledging no result as final; but rather, as I think, in the interests of credulity than of skepticism. Antiquaries, as a rule, are not skeptics. Their prepossessions and instincts are all the other way. Of course the existence

of a common passion in men of such opposite tendencies is a psychological fact of great value.

HARRINGTON. Had he discovered the name of the stone-mason he would not have been satisfied without unearthing his family and ancestors for several generations. Antiquaries often resemble misers, hoarding every trifle irrespective of its value. Skeptics are often spendthrifts and reject everything as valueless. The same cure applies to each excess: the adoption of definite standards of value and proportion.

MRS. HARRINGTON. As to which the insuperable difficulty would still remain. Who is to fix them? But to return to our subject, there is one undeniable evidence of Montaigne's Skepticism which Dr. Trevor passed over with an incidental notice, but which I should have insisted on most strongly.

DR. TREVOR. What was that?

MRS. HARRINGTON. The character of the inscriptions on the beams and rafters of his library, which are to be seen, I believe, to this day.¹ When a man, besides adopting a skeptical motto, surrounds himself with apophthegms and sentences of the same kind, there can be no question as to his genuine sympathies. But there seems to me an unconscious irony in this kind of library-decoration. The claims, nay, the very *raison d'être* of the tomes below appear scouted and ridiculed by the inscriptions above; just as the devotion of worshippers in a mediæval cathedral seems mocked by the grinning monkeys and scowling fiends of the carved work over their heads.

ARUNDEL. On the other hand, Mrs. Harrington, if, as you suggest, Montaigne's library was his church, it was but right that his creed, such as it was, should occupy a conspicuous position in it. I can imagine him sitting at his writing table composing his Essays; and in the interval between two sentences, each redolent of cynicism and unbelief, casting a glance aloft, and deriving fresh inspiration and encouragement from the skeptical dicta which hovered like a new revelation above him. Adopting his own irony, he might be represented in a symbolical picture, after the manner of a mediæval saint,

¹ Cf. Hazlitt, *Life*, p. xvii. But the fullest account of these inscriptions is that given by Dr. Payen in his *Nouveaux Documents sur Montaigne*, pp. 56-60.

intently watching, pen in hand, an angel poised with outstretched wings over his head, and bearing a scroll with the words, '*Solum certum, nihil esse certi.*'

‘Of things, men are sure about,
Surest of all is, doubt.’

MRS. ARUNDEL. Or you might paint him like one of the Evangelists, attended by his proper symbol: a chameleon, perhaps.

HARRINGTON. Whatever we may say of the irony and manifold meanings of the *Essais*, we must admit, I think, that sentences carved in wood carry with them an evidence of sincerity and *bonâ fides* which it is quite impossible to resist. For my part I would be content to let the proof of Montaigne's Skepticism rest on the testimony of his library beams.

DR. TREVOR. I cannot say that I attach greater importance to these inscriptions than I do to the *Essais*. Undoubtedly they have a common purport, and one very distinctly marked; but so, I contend, have the *Essais*.

MRS. HARRINGTON. Montaigne's merits as a philosopher and an essayist must, I suppose, be conceded. As a man I do not think he can be said to stand high. His disingenuous treatment of La Boétie,¹ and the cold careless way in which he mentions the massacre of St. Bartholomew, leave in my opinion an irretrievable stain on his character.

TREVOR. No doubt, considered from an heroic or even ordinary ethical point of view, Montaigne must be pronounced exceedingly imperfect. Still I apprehend it would be a mistake to suppose that his silence as to the St. Bartholomew is the least proof of acquiescence. Notwithstanding his personal friendship with Catherine de Medicis, he was hardly likely to have known the policy of the Catholic party beforehand; and when the event was over, the expostulations of a solitary seigneur, living a recluse life far from the capital, even if Montaigne had the courage to make them, could not have been of the slightest service; but his disgust with the times in which he lived, owing mainly to persecutions and religious wars, is a feature very distinctly impressed on his pages.

¹ Comp. on this point Bayle St. John, op. cit., vol. i. pp. 272-3.

ARUNDEL. He is an instance which seems to me to justify the old prejudice, that skepticism emasculates a man's character, both religious and moral. For the firm bony structure of dogma and conviction it substitutes a cartilaginous framework of purposelessness and expediency.

TREVOR. I am glad to hear you admit that the old notion is a prejudice. With such men as Sokrates, Ramus, Cornelius Agrippa and Giordano Bruno on our list, it would be difficult to share any other opinion. There is, of course, a kind of 'give and take' in all questions of human character; and you can no more expect incompatible excellencies in a man than in any other production of Nature.

MRS. ARUNDEL. After all our discussion, we seem to have arrived at the point we started with; and the chief thing we have ascertained is the impossibility of ascertaining anything clear on the subject. An appropriate decision, no doubt, but not quite satisfactory.

TREVOR. On the contrary, Mrs. Arundel, we all say that Montaigne is a skeptic of the extremest type. Our only difficulty has been to extract the simple fact from beneath the versatility and manysidedness by which it is occasionally obscured. Like our own Shakspeare, Montaigne is a multitudinous myriad-minded man. Had he been a dramatist, and assigned his manifold opinions to individual and appropriate characters, varying from a Roman Pontiff to a débauchée, and from a Stoic philosopher to a low buffoon, what a large picture gallery we should have had! Imagine the somewhat parallel case of Shakspeare writing Essays, and ideally concentrating in his own personality some twenty or thirty of his most diverse characters, and expressing, as his own opinions, the numerous and conflicting views of those characters, the result might have been productions similar in kind to Montaigne's.

MISS LEYCESTER. I must confess that I like that uncertain type of character, at least when accompanied by a commanding intellect. It is continually evolving something fresh, curious and surprising. As when travelling in a foreign country, one comes upon a new and unexpected bit of scenery at every turn of the road. Of course, the contrasts are sometimes rather sharp, *e.g.* when you find a dirty mud hovel in close proximity

to a lordly mansion, or after passing a fertile country you suddenly come upon a barren moor. But such abrupt changes only add to the continual excitement of the journey. On the other hand, what can be more insipid and humdrum than an ordinary type of civilized humanity, a man, *e.g.* whose imagination, vivacity, waywardness and eccentricity are all sacrificed to the single virtue of consistency. Whose intellect and feeling are modelled on the plan of a Dutch garden, and for whom spontaneity and genuine impulse cannot be said to exist. I would rather have the unrestricted luxuriance which is Nature's own instinct, than the eternal conformity to conventional pattern which it is the tendency of civilization to produce.

ARUNDEL. Well done, Miss Leycester! Montaigne and barbarism for ever!

TREVOR. Of course, a community of Shakspeares and Montaignes would be very delightful, if we could get it; although I have little doubt—such is the lamentable tendency of mankind to value mediocrity—we should sooner tire of human waywardness and eccentricity than of the uniform but orderly type of character evolved by moral and social restraints.

HARBINGTON. That I think unquestionable. . . . But there is one conspicuous defect in Montaigne's Skepticism which makes it inferior to most examples of Greek Pyrrhonism. It seems to have been divorced from genuine search; and therefore altogether opposed to advance in general human knowledge. One of the countless inconsistencies in his character was his dread of Neologianism of every kind. He ridiculed the astronomical discoveries of Galileo, despised the geographical discoveries of the time, deprecated the translation of the Bible into modern tongues, and in other respects comported himself as an Obscurantist. I agree so far with Arundel: with all his merits Montaigne was unquestionably a coward, possessing the insight he lacked the courage and fervour of truth.

ARUNDEL. I make Montaigne's cowardice in respect of scientific research, the effect of his Skepticism. You remember Sokrates also shared the same contempt for physical science.

TREVOR. I agree with you in thinking Montaigne a timid

man. But his standpoint towards physical discovery was certainly not that of an Obscurantist. The golden age of humanity for him was not in the future, but in the past, among his beloved ancients. He despaired of a sublimer wisdom than that of Plato, of better poets than Virgil, Horace, Ovid, and Lucretius, of eloquence transcending Cicero's, of moralists possessing a fuller or more varied experience of humanity than Plutarch and Seneca. The men of his own time appeared but dwarfs compared with these giants of a remote past; and Montaigne had but little conception, not to say appreciation, of any kind of knowledge that he found not in his favourite authors. Besides, his temper was evidently soured by the fanaticism and intolerance of the Huguenots. This was the most salient illustration of Neology that he knew; and the results in France, for the time being, were not precisely of that character that would have commended themselves to a timid "*laudator temporis acti*," like himself.

MRS. HARRINGTON. Montaigne being the man he was, I am at a loss to understand why so many of his biographers eulogise his pious death, as if it were a complete proof of his religious orthodoxy.

TREVOR. Roman Catholics have generally been very solicitous to prove that Montaigne was a true son of the Church, no doubt on account of his genius; had he been less endowed, or less influential, they would not be so anxious to claim him. As to his remarkable death-bed scene, it is, I think, explicable as the outcome of several predisposing causes. First, We must take into account his own calm reflective temperament. Secondly, His own self-discipline, through life, in Stoicism and philosophical equanimity. Thirdly, His imaginative powers, which enabled him, when in an emotional frame of mind, to appreciate very fully the possibilities (to give them no higher title) of the unseen world. Fourthly, The submission he had throughout his lifetime exacted from himself to the outward observances and devotional offices of the Church. Fifthly, His conviction that skeptical suspense, as the voluntary self-suppression of the reason, was itself a kind of religion. Putting all these considerations together, I do not think we need feel

much surprise at the serenity with which Montaigne met his 'supreme hour.'

HARRINGTON. In other words, Doctor, he died as he lived, a Pagan with a superficial tincture of Christianity—precisely my own view. For my part, I think we had better not attempt an exact discrimination of Montaigne's religion. He certainly was not an orthodox Romanist; and he had an intense dislike to Huguenots. I think it possible that, as you say, he would have embraced a freer and more enlightened Christianity such as he very possibly might have discussed in his many conferences with Henry of Navarre. For the rest, Montaigne's religion was like his philosophy, like his *Essais*, like himself, '*divers et ondoyant*.'

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PETER RAMUS.

‘The man who goes alone can start to-day, but he who travels with another must wait till that other is ready, and it may be a long time before they get off.’

THOREAU.

‘The pursuit of TRUTH hath been my only care ever since I first understood the meaning of the word. For this I have forsaken all hopes, all friends, all desires which might bias me and hinder me from driving right at what I aimed. For this I have spent my money, my means, my youth, and all I have, that I might remove from myself that censure of Tertullian *suo vitio quis quid ignorat*. If with all this cost and pains my purchase is but ERROR, I may say, “*to err* hath cost me more than it hath many *to find the Truth* ;” and TRUTH itself shall give me this testimony at last, that if I have missed of her, it is not my *fault* but my *misfortune*.’

J. HALES (of Eton).

‘Je supporte sans peine, et même avec joie ces orages, quand je contemple dans un paisible avenir sous l’influence d’une philosophie plus humaines les hommes devenus meilleur, plus polis, et plus éclairés.’

RAMUS. Quoted by Waddington, p. 14.

CHAPTER II.

PETER RAMUS.

ON this occasion, as Dr. Trevor had a sketch of Ramus¹ ready prepared, the meeting was held at Hilderton Hall.

When the gentlemen joined the ladies in the library after dinner, they found Miss Trevor entertaining her friends, Mrs. Harrington and Mrs. Arundel, with some matter of local interest, while Miss Leycester was seated at the library table with two or three open volumes before her.

ARUNDEL. What are you studying so intently, Miss Leycester?

MISS LEYCESTER. Well, I am trying to construct a back-

¹ The following are the authorities consulted and cited in this chapter:—

Works. P. Rami, *Scholæ in Liberalis Artes*, Basilæ, 1569. *Dialecticæ Libri Duo*, cum Commentariis G. Dounamie. Lond. 1669.

Extracts from divers works, collected and appended to M. Waddington's French monograph.

M. Waddington, *De Petri Rami vita, scriptis, Philosophia Parisiis* 1848.

Idem, *Ramus (Pierre de la Ramée) sa vie, ses écrits, et ses opinions*, par C. Waddington. Paris 1885. This is not a translation of the former work, but an independent and greatly enlarged treatise on the same subject. Except when the word (Latin) is added, this is the work cited under the head of *Waddington* in the following pages.

Gaillard, *Histoire de Francois I.* Vol. vii. p. 357 etc. and vol. viii.

Niceron, *Memoires*. Vol. xiii. and xx.

Crevier, *Histoire de La Université de Paris*. Vols. v. and vi.

Haag, *La France Protestante*. Art. 'La Ramee.' Vol. vi.

Le Croix du Maine, *Les Bibliothèques Françaises*. ii. p. 310.

Jules Barni, *Les Martyres de La Libre Pensée*. P. 107-135.

Emile Saisset, *Les Precurseurs de Descartes*.

Baillet, *Jugements des Savans*. v. 125-6, viii. 204-205.

Peter Ramus als Theologe, von P. Lobstein. Strassburg 1878.

Histoires. Ritter. Vol. ix.

Histoire des Revolutions de la Philosophie en France, par le Duc de Caraman. iii. p. 245, etc. Buhle Trans. by Jourdain. ii. 579.

Dictionaries. *Dict. des Sciences Philosophiques*, Art. 'Ramus.' *Nouvelle Biographie Generale*. Bayle, *Dict. Moreri, Grand Dict. Historique*. Vol. ix.

ground to our proposed historical portrait to-night. I always like to present every great man to my mind's eye as a single figure in the foreground of a canvas on which are depicted the chief personages and events of his time. As a great soldier used to be painted half-a-century ago as a gigantic figure in the forefront of a picture, while the battles in which he fought were arranged as background accessories, and represented by pigmy combatants contending behind his legs, so by the aid of Michelet and Martin, I am posing Ramus in front of a moving panorama of French history from 1500 to 1572.

ARUNDEL. No doubt a mode of studying biography picturesque and instructive; but the objection to it, or perhaps I should say to the excesses to which it is liable, is implied in your own words. A giant among pigmies, or Gulliver among Lilliputians, always gives a distorted view both of the man and of his historical surroundings. As a rule, the giant is not quite so great, nor are the pigmies quite so small. The greatest evil of our modern hero-worship is fostering this tendency to historical perversion. Our present fashion of a biography which styles itself 'the history of so and so and his times,' seems constructed on the principle that the said times, comprehending all the celebrities, political mutations, and memorable events which took place or part in them, were providentially designed only as a dancing rope, on and by which the great character was enabled to display his wonderful postures and superhuman agility.

HARRINGTON. For that matter our current literature is not wanting in examples of quite the opposite error. The great man, whoever he is, being like Virgil's mariners:—'*Rari nantes in gurgite vasto*'—quite immersed in a billowy ocean of contemporary history, in which he appears to swim in a forlorn and desperate manner, only being allowed to show his head above the waves at irregular intervals on purpose to take breath—and I suppose to make the occurrence of his name on the title page not altogether an impertinence or unveracity.

MISS LEYCESTER. At all events, give me the former treatment. Hero-worship, or the giant among pigmies, seems to me as true a view of the relations between eminent characters and the mere ordinary human strata in which, like precious

stones, they are found embedded, as any other. Take any period of history and the really great names evolved in it you may count on the fingers of one hand. In the first half of the sixteenth century, *e.g.* there were *two* 'best Frenchmen,' to use M. Martin's words, Coligny and Ramus;¹ and both were murdered in the St. Bartholomew. It seems to me a necessary law of the universe that real grandeur in Nature and Humanity is only to be met with at distant intervals of time and space. No doubt a providential arrangement, lest our appetites should be cloyed and blunted by a too lavish magnificence. If every one lived in a pine-sheltered cot in an Alpine valley, with a deep wooded ravine or a mountain five miles high always in front of him, who would care to travel, or to buy Alpenstocks and join Alpine clubs?

ARUNDEL. Your exposition of the functions of history, whatever its truth, is not devoid of candour. The notion of a historical epoch *evolving out of it*, with immense labour and cost, one great man, together with numberless approximations, and therefore failures, may be thus *Pinnock*-ized:—

Question. What is history?

Answer. An enormous machine, whose innumerable wheels, springs, steam-boilers, and motive-powers, are happily designed by Providence for the creation and moulding of human giants. A potter's wheel in short, only on a very large scale.

Question. Is Nature or the Designer of this machine uniformly successful?

Answer. By no means; she can only effect the creation or evolution of a single giant out of perhaps 10,000 failures; still as her object is the giants, not the failures, that doesn't matter much.

To all of which I only add, alas! Poor Failures!

TREVOR. Omar Khayyàm similarly compassionates the "earthen vessels" of ordinary humanity.

'Said one among them—"Surely not in vain
My substance of the common earth was ta'en
And to this figure moulded, to be broke,
Or trampled back to shapeless earth again."'²

¹ *Histoire de France*, vol. ix. p. 332, note.

² *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*: Quatrain lxxx. iv.

But we must not lose sight of our starting point. Assuming, Miss Leycester, that you have, with the aid of Michelet and Martin, constructed your background to my proposed outline of Ramus, is it too much to ask you to give us some idea of it?

MISS LEYCESTER. Oh, no; I am quite willing to give you my hastily-formed impressions. Behind the figure of Ramus, whom I conceive as a noble-looking man—serene, thoughtful, and courageous—robed in his professor's gown, with a cap something like a Turkish fez, on his head, I see the canvas crowded with all kinds of personages and horrible pictures. Among the notabilities arranged next behind the main figure are the crowned heads—the priest and favourite-ridden Francis I., the good-natured *fainéant*, Henry II., the poor scrofulous weakling, Francis II., and the bloodthirsty imbecility, Charles IX. Between them, in the guise of a witch stirring her cauldron of foul plots, treacheries and assassinations, I discern the sensual and cruel features of Catherine de Medicis. The smoke from her cauldron, as it disperses in the remote background of the picture, seems to develop into battles, murders, and cruelties of all kinds. Here a town is being sacked, there a widow and orphans are weeping over a corpse. In another place, in the centre of the background, are scenes of the St. Bartholomew; while in one corner we have a panorama of the chief events in Ramus's life. So I see a boy walking along a country road with a rude direction-post inscribed *à Paris*. Next, a pale-looking youth, studying Plato by lamp-light, while a clock in the room points to 3 A.M. Then a man hiding under a Cardinal's cloak. Then, again, a college lecturer addressing a large assemblage of youths; until, in the last scene, the body of a grey-headed old man, murdered and disfigured, is seen falling into a courtyard, while the faces of his brutal assassins appear at an open and blood-stained window, watching the fall.

TREVOR. Thanks, Miss Leycester. You have given us in brief a picture of what is, unquestionably, the most terrible period of French history, next to the Terror of 1789-93; and one instinctively turns one's eyes from the repulsive accessories of our historical portrait, in order to let them rest on the placid

and indomitable countenance of Ramus; just as, in fact, he himself did, by withdrawing from the stormy sea of political and religious dissensions outside, to the learned privacy of his study. . . . But you seem well up in his history?

MRS. HARRINGTON. Oh, yes; we have been reading about him in M. Jules Barni's *Les Martyrs de la libre Pensée*.

TREVOR. I know the book; but the Ramus-chapter in it is only an abstract of Waddington's learned and exhaustive monograph on the subject. Ramus is singularly fortunate in having found such a well-informed and appreciative biographer; and we also are to be congratulated on being able to undertake our study of him with Waddington's book in our hands.

ARUNDEL. Meanwhile, Doctor, I want to ask why you include him among our Skeptics. I can't say I have gone far into the subject; but nothing that I have been able to learn about him seems to warrant such a classification.

TREVOR. I suspect, Arundel, if you or I had happened to be resident in Paris in the year 1536, when Ramus took his degree, we should not only have regarded him as a skeptic, but the greatest skeptic of that age. When we get further into our subject, you will find that he is a genuine free-thinker, both in religion and in philosophy. In the latter aspect he ranks as high as, or higher than, any other name on our list. He is the most conspicuous representative in modern thought of the reaction against Aristotelian dogmatism, which for so many centuries held all philosophical and scientific, and, to a great extent, theological speculation as well, in bondage. No doubt some premonitory symptoms of it we have already met with in Petrarca and Pomponazzi, but for its first clear, fearless, uncompromising expression we must refer to Ramus.

HARRINGTON. True, Doctor. Ramus was the Luther of mediæval Peripateticism, the reformer of scholastic philosophy, as the Wittenberg monk was of its religion. It is difficult to determine to which of the two names, or rather the causes identified with them, modern culture owes most. We are so much accustomed to regard mediæval dogmatism as entirely ecclesiastical, that we are apt to lose sight of the fact that by means of Aristotle's works, and the position they finally occupied in the Church, it had become philosophical as well. Not

only a man's religious belief, but his scientific pursuits, his metaphysical studies, and even his political convictions, were tyrannized over by dogma. What between Aristotle's dicta on the one hand and the Church's decrees on the other, the independent thinker was placed between a veritable Scylla and Charybdis; and it required careful steering to avoid both. We are happily so used to the *Libertas philosophandi*, that we can hardly realize a time when the traversing of a single dictum of 'The Master' was considered a crime liable to be brought before law courts, and punishable *by death*.¹ Imagine *e.g.* some English logician, as Archbishop Whately or John Stuart Mill, arraigned before a Committee of the House of Lords for dialectical heresy in presuming to contradict Aristotle's *Organon*! And what made the case still worse in the time of Ramus, the Aristotle he opposed was mainly the Aristotle of the Schools, and bore the same relation to the genuine writings of the Stagirite, as the Christianity of the sixteenth century did to that of the Gospels.

MISS LEYCESTER. In an age when he was much more respected than known, Aristotle's must have been a convenient name to conjure with, not only for theologians, but also for laymen. 'Who is this Aristotle?' one of the French kings once asked, on the occasion of some Peripatetic commotion. The answer was—'Sire, he was a Greek who—preferred a Republic to a monarchy;' a reply, no doubt, as comprehensive and true as most courtier-like answers when the object is to hoodwink or prejudice, rather than impart information.

ARUNDEL. We have the same invidious use of him in days when he had not yet acquired the odour of ecclesiastical orthodoxy and sanctity. It was then urged, in opposition to the attempts to make him a Christian teacher, that he believed in the eternity of matter, and denied the immortality of the soul.

TREVOR. Nevertheless, the influence of Aristotle on mediæval thought was, as we have seen, beneficial in many ways. For a time he was the only lamp of pure philosophy to which the Schoolman had lawful access. . . . But the lamp that

¹ In 1624 an edict was promulgated, which prohibited any attack on the System of Aristotle under pain of death.

is useful or indispensable in darkness is only an eyesore when the sun has risen, especially if the night be artificially protracted in order to compel men to see by its feeble rays. In the sixteenth century that was the position of Aristotle; and we can hardly be surprised if Ramus, and other far-seeing spirits, wished to call attention to the dawn, and to put the lamp out.

HARRINGTON. Only they might have set about their work with a little more gentleness and consideration, remembering the undoubted services of the lamp; and albeit not forgetting that the dawn visits the hill people sooner than it does the valley folk. I am not so positively certain myself that the dawn was so far advanced as to make the lamp altogether needless.

MR. ARUNDEL. Besides—and that is one thing which these hasty exchangers of ‘old lamps for new,’ or, rather, night-lights for sunshine, are apt to forget—eyes long used to lamp-light require a little preliminary closing and rubbing before they can see by sunlight.

MRS. HARRINGTON. It seems to me you gentlemen are riding your simile rather hard. . . . But what relation was there between Ramus’s philosophical skepticism and his religious opinions. I presume it was as a disbeliever in Aristotle that he suffered martyrdom?

TREVOR. Mainly, no doubt; but he did not limit either his inquiry or his skepticism to philosophy. He became a Huguenot, and was, I suspect, a man of much broader and more advanced views than most of his co-religionaries, by whom he was regarded with distrust. Probably the Calvinists and Theodore Beza were afraid that the man who could throw off so easily the yoke of Aristotle’s *Organon* would not be very patient under that of Calvin’s *Institutes*. . . . His most cruel death, with the horrible circumstances attending it, was due, however, not to any public malice, but to private vengeance. If he had not made an enemy of Carpenterius, an ignorant and unscrupulous fanatic, he might possibly have escaped the terrors of the St. Bartholomew.

HARRINGTON. I don’t think we can be quite sure of that. It is true Ramus enjoyed the protection of Catherine de

Medicis and of the king. Still, the fanaticism of the Parisian mob had, on the third day of the massacre, quite escaped from the control of the authorities, who had first impelled it on its murderous career.¹ As Voltaire sarcastically remarks :—

‘Quand un Roi veut le Crime, il est trop obéi.’

MRS. HARRINGTON. But I suppose we must absolve them from direct participation in the deed. The horrible event has so much bloodshed of its own to answer for, that it seems superfluous and unjust to charge it with a crime perpetrated outside of its authority.

HARRINGTON. On the contrary, Maria. I think Charles IX., Catherine de Medicis, Henry of Anjou, and the whole wretched crew by which they were surrounded, are undoubtedly responsible for the murder of Ramus. They were accessories before the fact, to all intents and purposes. If a man wilfully lets loose a reservoir, knowing that in its progress it must drown some hundreds of people, though he may not know, or consider, whether it will drown a particular individual, yet if the individual loses his life in the flood, even though an enemy pushes him into the water, the man who let the waters out is at least equally guilty. Had there been no St. Bartholomew there would have been no murder of Ramus. Given a St. Bartholomew, and Ramus's life is, *ipso facto*, endangered, independently of the malice, or even of the existence, of Carpenterius.

TREVOR. We shall be better able, perhaps, to mete out to Ramus's murderers their due proportion of guilt when we have examined more fully the nature and circumstances of the deed. At present the discussion is premature. Before considering our Skeptic's death, we must first contemplate the noble life which preceded it. Unhappily, there is a close and intimate

¹ M. Waddington, it is true, says, that on the third day of the Massacre, the popular fury had become calmed, p. 254; but this is denied by Martin, *Histoire de France*, ix. p. 331, who says, ‘La nuit (*i.e.* of August 24th) on égorgea dans les prisons; le lendemain, le surlendemain le massacre continua dans la ville avec une nouvelle furie.’ No doubt the king issued on the 26th an edict prohibiting further massacres; but, as Herr Soldau remarks, by that time few Huguenots were left. See *La France et la Saint-Barthélemy*, translated by Schmidt, p. 87.

relation, not to say congruity, between the two; for the tempest which finally submerged him was but the last and worst of a series of storms, with which, so far as his public career was concerned, he had to contend throughout his life. Yet if it be the glory of a warrior to die on the field on which he has fought so bravely, equal honour must be awarded to the philosopher who, in the cause of truth, yielded his life in a vain struggle with religious, philosophical, and political tyranny, and who fittingly closed his career on a blood-stained field, on which, it might have seemed, the Free-thought of France had also for the time been utterly vanquished and overthrown.

* * * * *

Had either of us been on the direct road leading from Cuth,¹ a small market town in the district of Vermandois in Picardy (between Noyon and Soissons), to Paris, on some spring or summer day of the year 1523, he or she might have chanced to see a boy with a bright intelligent face, but poorly clad, and carrying a wallet at his back, trudging with naked feet in the direction of the capital. Such a sight was in those days not unusual. On any of the main roads leading to Paris youths, or perhaps I should say, children, from eight to ten years of age, might not unfrequently have been met with, sometimes in company with the carriers and traders to Paris, sometimes alone, begging their way to the University, animated by the Divine hunger of knowledge. But what rendered the spectacle a little more remarkable in the present instance was the evident poverty and friendlessness of the boy. We can readily imagine the expressions of sympathy he met with from the kind-hearted peasant women, from time to time, as he humbly asked for bread, or to be told the road to Paris. The child we are thus supposing ourselves to have met was Peter Ramus (de la Ramée), whose father was a poor labourer dwelling at Cuts, and whose grandfather had been a charcoal-burner. The family, though reduced, was of noble descent. The grandfather had once been a landed proprietor, but, like so many others in those troublous times, his patrimony had been desolated by the wars be-

¹ On maps of France this place is generally denominated *Cuts*, but there are no less than fourteen ways of spelling the word, which are duly enumerated by Waddington, *Ramus sa vie*, etc., p. 286. It is situated on the eastern boundary of the Department of Oise, and a short distance from Noyon, the birth-place of Calvin.

tween France and Burgundy; and he was compelled to settle in Cuts, the district round which was then wild and wooded, and to adopt the trade of charcoal-burner.¹ Both the present poverty and the former high descent of the family are discernible in the boy: one marked by the clothing, which is that of an ordinary peasant's child; the other by features bold, vivacious and intelligent. Could we foresee the destinies of the young scholar, we should find him in the course of a few years elevated to the foremost rank of the thinkers and teachers of the sixteenth century. At present, however, this is a distant and not very probable prospect. . . . In due time the boy arrives at his destination, and we can imagine the bewilderment of the little Picardian at the crowded streets, the great buildings, the grand spectacles of the capital. Nevertheless he makes the best of his way to some one or other of the many colleges comprehended within the university. He craves above all things knowledge, and the means of attaining it; but he also wants food and shelter. Unhappily neither can be obtained without money, and little Peter has none. Years after, when the little bare-footed Picardian had become the head of a college and the foremost name in the University of Paris, his persistent attempts to establish gratuitous teaching in the university were, as we know, stimulated by the remembrance of his own youthful struggles, when he watched with wistful eye and longing heart the students of the various colleges trooping into lecture rooms from which his poverty excluded him.² Doubtless he offered

¹ One of the many noble traits in Ramus's character is the fearlessness with which he avows his humble origin, and the poverty in which his early life was spent. In the discourse he delivered on his installation to a chair in the College of France, 1551, he recounts the history of his family, and answers the reproaches which had been levelled at its poverty in the true spirit of a Christian and a philosopher. 'I am,' he says, 'a Christian, and have never deemed poverty an evil. I am not one of those Peripatetics (Aristotelians) who think that a man cannot do great things unless he possesses great riches.' He adds the prayer, 'O, Almighty God, this grandson of a charcoal-burner, and son of a labourer, this man weighed down by so many disgraces,—he does not ask Thee for riches, which would be useless to him for a profession whose only tools are paper and pen and ink; but he implores Thee to grant him throughout his whole life an honest mind, and a zeal and perseverance which will never leave him.' Cf. Waddington, p. 18. We may well agree with the Duke of Anjou in Marlowe's *Massacre of Paris*,—

'Ne'er was there collier's son so full of pride.'

But it is the pride which is born of humility, and is the genuine mark and attribute of true nobility of soul.

² In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries there were public gratuitous lectures on philosophy delivered in the Rue du Fuarre. See Crevier, *Histoire de L'Université*, vi. p. 92; but these had fallen into disuetude before the accession

himself as servant to some of the better class of students who could afford such a luxury; but, so far as we know, without success. His ill-fortune may perhaps be ascribed, at least in part, to the social disturbances of France and of Paris in the year 1523. Contemporary chroniclers inform us that the capital was the scene of continual and frightful disorders; quarrels and murders were of almost daily occurrence;¹ so that Ramus's first acquaintance with the city and her blood-stained streets afforded a gloomy foreboding of his own fate thirty-nine years after, when his mangled and dying body was drawn along the same streets and cast into the Seine. But whatever the cause, the boy's unwearied efforts were unsuccessful. At last, in despair he turned his face homewards to the labourer's cot in Picardy; where he was doubtless received with joy by his affectionate mother, and resumed for a time those rural occupations from which he had fled to Paris. How long he remained at home on this occasion we do not know; probably as long as his persistent will was able to suppress the cravings of intellectual restlessness. In time the latter again asserted their authority, and young Ramus once more left his father's house for Paris in quest of knowledge; unluckily this time also without success. At last his mother's brother, a Carpenter in name and trade, but exceedingly poor, consented to receive him into his house. Young Peter remained with his uncle for some time, travelling with him to other parts of France to find employment; and when these attempts failed, again returned with him to the capital. But the poor man was unable to maintain himself, and his sister was too poor to render him any assistance, consequently the boy was once more turned adrift and compelled to seek a new home. This he providentially found. He engaged himself as servant, being now twelve years of age, to a student in the College of Navarre, a certain M. de la Brosse.² He had now reached the lowest step of the ladder which was destined to lead him to learning and fame. Domiciled among scholars, professors, and university lectures, he at last breathed the

of Francis I. (Waddington, p. 410). One of Ramus's projects of university reform, in after life, was the restoration of these street lectures on philosophy. See below, and compare on the character of the Schools of the Rue du Fuarre, MM. Le Clerc et Renan, *Hist. Litt. de la France au 14^{me} Siecle*, vol. i. p. 284, ii. 79, 80.

¹ Cf. Martin, *Histoire de France*, viii. 40.

² This was the usual resource of poor students of the University of Paris in those days. Postel, a celebrated contemporary of Ramus, and a liberal thinker like himself, began his studious life in the same way.—Waddington, p. 20. Comp. Mr. Bass-Mullinger's *University of Cambridge* (pp. 346, 347) for an interesting account of the manner in which the poor scholars of that university were wont to alleviate their poverty.

atmosphere for which he so ardently panted. The young scholar immediately set to work with all the indomitable pertinacity which marked his character, and the next eight or nine years of his life were years of painful and arduous effort. Looking back on this period in after life, he gives this noble retrospect of it: 'For many years I endured servitude of the hardest possible kind, but my mind has always been free; that has never been sold or degraded:' a boast of intellectual freedom of which we shall soon have an opportunity of estimating the value. His time he divided into two portions. The day he was compelled to devote to his master's service; the night, he was urged by a compulsion hardly less severe—the burning thirst for knowledge—to spend in study. So that throughout the twenty-four hours the young student often allowed himself only three hours' sleep.¹ He devised a kind of alarum, like that which Aristotle is said to have used for the same purpose, to rouse himself at midnight in order to pursue his studies. The consequence of this severe application upon the growing youth was to have been expected; a serious attack of ophthalmia seized him, and for a long time retarded his progress. But he no sooner recovered than he again set to work with renewed ardour. By dint of labours so persevering and unceasing, he was able to pass through the curriculum of liberal arts² required by the College of Navarre; three and a half years being afterwards devoted to a special course of philosophy. Who his masters were in other departments of study we have no means of knowing. His teacher in philosophy, M. Waddington conjectures to have been a certain Jean Hennuyer, who was a man of independent and liberal character,³ and probably helped Ramus forward in the path

¹ On the hardships which the poor students of the university were accustomed to undergo in the sixteenth century, see the article 'Comment se 'aisoit une Éducation au XVI^e siècle,' in *Variétés Historiques et Littéraires* (Bibl. Elzev.), vol. x. pp. 151–160.

² The liberal arts consisted generally of the *Trivium* (grammar, rhetoric, and logic), and the *Quadrivium*, viz. arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy. The Faculty of Arts in which Ramus was studying comprehended grammar, the humanities, and philosophy.

³ For some information on the after career of this worthy man see Waddington, pp. 290, 291. After he left the College of Navarre, he became a Dominican and Doctor of Theology, and was promoted in 1560 to the Bishopric of Lisieux. He seems to have been, if the ordinary tradition respecting him is to be credited, a bishop of the type of which history has left us examples in the two Borromei, and fiction in Victor Hugo's touching portrait of Monseigneur Myriel. 'Bishop Hennuyer had,' says Waddington, 'many Protestants in his diocese at the time of the St. Bartholomew, and he manifested as much zeal to save them from massacre, as he had previously displayed to convert them in a peaceable manner. . . . When the Lieutenant of the King com-

of free-enquiry he had already marked out for himself. To me, I confess, guesses as to the teachers of a youth like Ramus seem rather superfluous. He was himself his own best master; and the teachings of others must have received by his own vigorous analysis and original intellect so thorough a recasting, that they could only have retained ultimately the form he chose to assign them. Throughout life his motto was that of so many other skeptics, 'Unbelief is the beginning of knowledge.'

We come now to the period of Ramus's philosophical conversion. He had been duly instructed in the logical treatises of Aristotle like every other of the thousands of youths who were deriving their mental nutriment from all the learned seminaries and teachers of

communicated to him the order to massacre the Huguenots, he replied, "No, no, sir! I oppose and shall for ever oppose the execution of such an order. I am the shepherd of Lisieux, and those whom you say you are commanded to kill are my sheep. Although they are now wandering and have left the fold which Jesus Christ, the Royal Shepherd, has committed to my care, they may nevertheless return. I do not see in the Gospel that the shepherd should allow the blood of his sheep to be shed; on the contrary I find that he is obliged to shed his own blood and to give his life for them." Thereupon the governor demanded for his own discharge, a refusal in writing, which the bishop immediately gave him.' Such was the man who was Ramus's instructor—a fitting instrument to confirm and cherish, though he might not have originated, the germs of free-thought in his mind and heart. For a further account of the good bishop, comp. the *Mercur de France*, October, 1742, pp. 2129-2173, in which is recorded his epitaph. It was afterwards destroyed.

The incident above related was made the subject of a powerful drama in three acts by L. Sebastien Mercier, in 1772, which was translated into English a few years after under the title of 'Jean Hennuyer, Bishop of Lisieux; or, the Massacre of St. Bartholomew.'

It should be added to the foregoing remarks, which were founded on the authorities above cited, that there seems some reason to question the historical genuineness of this anecdote of Hennuyer; though it can plead the sanction of a local tradition of long standing. The question was first mooted in the *Mercur de France* (vol. ii. of June, 1764), and (vol. i. of Dec., 1746). Its fullest discussion, as against the anecdote, is to be found in M. Dubois, *Recherches sur la Normandie*, pp. 55-78. It may be said to consist of two reasons: 1. A denial that Hennuyer was a tolerant man, which is based upon his opposition some years previously to a royal edict granting freedom of worship to Protestants. 2. Some grounds exist for believing that he was not at Lisieux, but at Paris, at the date of the massacre. Comp. Martin, *Histoire de France*, vol. ix. p. 341, note. In his drama, *La Saint Barthélemy*, M. Remusat adopts a modified version of the story. Apparently accepting Hennuyer's absence from Lisieux as proved, he does not reject the old tradition of his opposition to the St. Bartholomew, but in a striking passage makes the bishop defend his flock before the King and Catherine de Medicis.—Cf. *La Sainte Barthélemy*, pp. 306-310.

Europe. Generally these dicta were received with as absolute submission as any dogma of the Church. Aristotle's *Organon* was the Apostle's Creed of philosophy—the wicket gate of all speculative thought. Its methods and conclusions were to be received, not examined, still less denied. But Ramus's intellect, as I have said, was by no means of the passively receptive order, nor was his native courage likely to be quelled by a mere name, even though so awful and infallible as that of Aristotle. Accordingly part of his own *private* philosophical course was devoted to a searching investigation of both the truth and utility of Aristotle's logic: but the story must be told in his own words, it is instructive as illustrating the skeptical intellect in the domain of pure philosophy. 'When I came to Paris,' he says, 'I fell into the subtleties of sophists, and was taught the liberal arts by questions and disputes. You (addressing his readers) may be luckier than I was. Amidst the clamour of the schools, where I passed so many days, so many months, so many years, never did I hear a word—one single word—on the applications of logic. I believed then ("the scholar ought to believe," he interposes sarcastically, "for so Aristotle wishes!") I believed that I had no cause to distress myself about the nature of logic and the end it proposed to itself, but that the only thing needful was to make it the object of our clamour and disputes. Consequently I disputed and vociferated with all my might. . . . You will ask me perhaps when and how I finally discovered a better method? I will tell you, freely and candidly; so that if the remedy which delivered me from a condition so wretched should be useful to you, you may employ it largely. I do not undertake to convince you by the reasoning.¹ I only wish to explain to you truly and straightforwardly how I came out from that darkness. Having devoted three years and six months to the scholastic philosophy according to the rules of our academy—having read, discussed, and meditated on the different treatises of the *Organon*, . . . when I came to consider the years entirely occupied in the study of scholastic arts, I wanted to learn how I should afterwards apply the knowledge I had gained at the cost of so much labour and fatigue. I soon discovered that all this logic did not make me more learned in history and antiquity, nor more skilful in eloquence, nor a better poet, nor wiser in any respect. Alas! miserable man, how greatly was I astonished! how deeply did I sigh! How did I accuse my deficiencies, how bemoan the misfortune

¹ Compare the well-nigh *ipsissima verba* in which Descartes describes the object of his *Discours de la Methode*: 'My design is not to teach here the method which every one ought to follow in order to guide well his reason, but only to show the way in which I tried to guide my own.'

of my destiny—the barrenness of a mind which after so many labours could neither collect nor even perceive the fruits of that wisdom which it was alleged was found so abundantly in Aristotle's Logic. . . . At last I met with Galen's work on the opinions of Hippokrates and Plato.¹ . . . That parallel of Plato and Hippokrates caused me great satisfaction; but it inspired me with an ardour still greater to read all the dialogues of Plato which treat of logic. . . . It was then, to speak sooth, that I found the haven so long desired. That which I especially relished, that which I loved in Plato, was the method by which Sokrates refuted false opinions, attempting above everything to elevate his hearers above the senses, the prejudices, and the testimony of men, in order to lead them to their own natural sense of right, and liberty of judgment. For it appeared to him insane that a philosopher should let himself be led by the opinions of the vulgar, who for the most part are false and deceitful, instead of applying himself to know only facts and their true causes. In short, I began to say to myself (I should have hesitated to say it to another), Well! what is to prevent my Sokratizing a little, and examining, independently of Aristotle's authority, whether that doctrine of his logic is the most true and most useful. Perhaps that philosopher has abused us by his authority; if so, I need not be surprised at my having studied his books without deriving profit from them, since they contain none. . . . *What if all that doctrine should be false!*'

Such was the stupendous conclusion to which the young student had arrived, such was the process employed in attaining it. His biographer well points out the close similarity between this process and the method pursued by Descartes nearly a century afterwards. We, with our gallery of skeptics, can institute a larger comparison; for we know that a similar method is common to many (I might say all) free-thinkers who possess sufficient mental originality and independence to enquire into the nature and authority of beliefs forced

¹ The treatise *Περὶ τῶν Ἱπποκράτους καὶ Πλάτωνος Δογμάτων*. *Galen opera*, Ed. Kuhn, v. p. 181, etc. The parallel between Hippokrates and Plato which thus aroused Ramus from his Peripatetic slumber is thus enunciated by Galen in another work, *θεραπευτ. μεθοδου*, I, *Opera*, Kuhn, x. p. 14. 'Plato thought the nature of the mind was to be discovered by a similar method to that by which Hippokrates investigated the nature of the body.' Ramus's attention was also arrested by the fact that Galen bestows the title of the greatest dialectician not on Aristotle but on Plato. It may be added that in another place he ascribes his conversion to Sokratism to the medium of Xenophon: 'Ainsi estant en cest emoy, je tombé, comme conduit par quelque bon ange, en Xénophon, puis en Platon, où je cogneus la Philosophie de Socrate.'—*Remonstrance au Conseil Privé*, p. 25.

upon them from without. Besides his Aristotelian skepticism, Ramus was, as you may have noticed, on the very verge of the main principle of modern experimental science, as it was afterwards laid down by Bacon and Descartes. Unfortunately both the skepticism and the discovery were too premature to be effective. Aristotle and the School philosophy had not yet ceased to reign in the universities of Europe, and the enormous power which they wielded, and the manifold influences, both lay and clerical, which they commanded, Ramus was soon able to test for himself.

Having thus entered on a path of discovery, Ramus was not the man to leave the question half investigated, nor, having arrived at a conclusion, was he at all disposed to shrink from its avowal—no matter what the consequences might be. He had ascertained, as he thought, that most of Aristotle's works were spurious, and that the few which had most claim to genuineness were full of falsehood. Nothing remained but to announce his conclusions boldly and unconditionally. This he accordingly did. On taking his degree of Master of Arts, he was obliged to propound a thesis on some scholastic subject, which he was required to defend for a whole day against all comers.¹ He had the temerity, the '*bizarria d' ingegno*,' as Tassoni calls it, to submit as his thesis the extraordinary paradox—*All Aristotle's writings are false!*² We may imagine the consternation of the authorities at such unparalleled audacity; and we may not unreasonably suppose that some steps were taken to induce the aspiring candidate for academical honours to change his subject to one not so outrageously at variance with all the most cherished traditions and teachings of the university. If such attempts were made they were unsuccessful. The day arrived; and Ramus duly expounded his thesis, the public enunciation of which was doubtless received with mingled anger and derision. It seemed too preposterous for belief that a young student of twenty-one years should thus publicly hurl his intellectual gauntlet in the teeth, not only of the University of Paris, but of the whole academical and learned world of Europe.

The thesis however had this advantage for its opponents: it was one on which every scholar in the university felt himself qualified to speak. Ramus could have had no lack of adversaries—men who had made the study of Aristotle the one task of their lives, and who regarded his least utterance with a submissive awe which they would

¹ For similar usages in English universities in mediæval times, comp. Mr. Bass-Mullinger's *History of the University of Cambridge*, p. 356.

² 'Quæcumque ab Aristotele dicta essent commentitia esse.' Freigius *Vita P. Rami*, pp. 9, 10. Comp. Waddington, p. 28. Bayle, *Dict.*, Art. 'Ramus,' note C.

not have accorded to any other human teacher.¹ Besides, the comprehensive terms of Ramus's proposition left room for a very diversified antagonism. It was not only the *Organon* which he declared false, but all the writings of 'the Master.' Each separate work of Aristotle, so far as then known, was a position from which he might be assailed. He was therefore in the position of a general who has a large entrenched camp to defend; or like a redoubtable hero of romance, he had to keep the tournament lists against all comers. How the contest ebbed and flowed, what falls or mishaps the champion of the day sustained, history does not relate. Had it been a physical contest between two potentates, in which thousands of lives were sacrificed in settling some miserable squabble, arising perhaps from a mere breach of etiquette or some equally trivial cause, history would have taken care to narrate circumstantially the fortunes of the battle; but the bloodless triumphs of the intellect, and struggles for mental freedom, she passes by with a glance of contempt,—yet it would not be too much to say that the real welfare of humanity, the cause of European civilization, was more concerned in Ramus's daring impeachment of philosophical autocracy, than in any material contest fought in France during his lifetime. For we must not forget that Ramus's quarrel was in reality not so much with the genuine Aristotle as with the traditional Peripateticism on which Scholasticism claimed to be based, and by means of which it tyrannized over the human intellect. What he called Aristotle, was the fictitious image of him which had obtained currency in the Church before his authentic works in their original language had become known in the universities of Europe. Hence Ramus's animadversions on the great thinker are frequently unfair, or else are founded upon perversions of Aristotle's real meaning. No doubt his instincts were correct, if his antagonism was somewhat misdirected. Scholasticism based upon a pseudo-Aristotle had become an incubus on human thought, and an obstruction to human progress. And it was against this baneful but potent enemy, this huge champion of mediæval Philistinism, that Ramus on his degree day 'set the battle in array.'

What is certain is that he was successful. During the whole spring day² (the degrees were generally conferred during Lent) he

¹ Comp. Niceron, *Memoires*, xiii. p. 262, 'Tous les professeurs qui ne connoissoient d'autre philosophe qu'Aristote, et qui croyoient qu'on ne pouvoit sans crime aller contre son autorité, prirent feu, et vinrent attaquer la Thèse avec toute le force que leur habileté pouvoit leur fournir. Mais le Répondant repoussa pendant un jour entier leurs attaques avec tant de subtilité et d'adresse, que tout Paris en fut dans l'étonnement.'

² In the English universities the 'inception' exercises pertaining to a master's degree began as early as 7 o'clock in the morning. Comp. Mr. Bass-Mullinger, *ut ante*, p. 356.

defended the difficult position he had chosen; and notwithstanding the enormous amount of Peripatetic and Scholastic learning brought to bear on him, he managed to hold his own. So great a skill, address and dialectical ingenuity did he manifest, that the authorities had no choice but to 'cap' him; in other words, to confer on him his degree.

But though he had achieved his triumph and carried off the prize of the tournay, the excitement and scandal of the day's proceedings were immense. Not only was Paris alarmed for the honour of her favourite teacher, to whom she had become a second Stagira, but the excitement extended itself rapidly to every university town in Europe. No syllogism in the *Organon* was clearer than the inference that if Ramus was right, the teaching in all the universities in Europe was wrong. If Aristotle's works were spurious¹ it would not be any longer possible to crush every objection and repress every doubt by the magic words 'the Master says.' If further they were false, all Peripatetic teachers were reduced to a still more awkward dilemma. The rumour of Ramus's success soon reached Italy; where the poet Tassoni says—no doubt on trustworthy information—that though Ramus had aroused against him all the learned, 'he defended himself with so much boldness and subtlety of reply, that the city of Paris remained stupefied and bewildered.' The only adequate historical parallel to Ramus's action—the universal consternation it produced, and in a certain degree the consequences which sprang from it—was Martin Luther's nailing his Theses to the door of the cathedral church of Wittenberg.

In order to appreciate the full meaning of this parallel, it will be well to cast a passing retrospective glance at the growth of Aristotelianism during the century immediately preceding Ramus's attack. We saw, in our discussion on the Schoolmen, the important part which the Stagirite plays in the history of mediæval free-thought, and the jealousy with which the Church of the twelfth and following centuries watched the growth of Aristotelian learning. No doubt the primary effect which the study of the great thinker, notwithstanding its imperfect presentation, was calculated to produce on minds brought up and dieted on religious abstractions, and hemmed in on all sides

¹ See the synopsis of the opinions of Ramus and other anti-Aristotelians on this point in Barth. St. Hilaire's *La Logique d'Aristote*, i. p. 64, etc.

² 'La quale havendo eccitati contra di lui tutti gl' ingegni, tutte le professioni, tutte le scuole, egli nondimeno con tanta prontezza, e sottigliezza de risposte la difese, che fe rimaner confusa e stupita la città di Parigi.'—Tassoni, *Pensieri diversi*, x. ch. iii., Waddington, p. 29, note, who quotes from *La Croix du Maine*, ii. p. 312.

by formidable barriers of ecclesiastical dogma, was of a wholesome and generous kind. Still it was not without disadvantages, partly inherent in, partly incidental to, the circumstances of the case. Among the former was the despotism which reviving Peripateticism threatened to exercise over the intellects of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. To employ Bacon's comparison, it seemed as if Aristotle, like an oriental despot, was resolved to reign alone by ruthlessly destroying all possible rivals to the throne.¹ Happily the Renaissance, which contributed to increase the power and enlarge the domain of Peripateticism, contained within itself elements destined in course of time to abate the mischiefs arising from its exclusive preponderance. The Platonic schools of Italy, the introduction of the Greek language, enlarged acquaintance with other Greek thinkers, nay, the better knowledge of his own works from genuine Greek copies, all conspired, in course of time, to lessen the autocratic character he had received. For this the Church was mainly responsible. Peripateticism, as its adopted child, shared in its own dogmatic growth and its absolutist tendencies. Hence the conclusions of Aristotle came to possess the same authoritative sanction as a pope's bull or the decrees of a general council, and thereby they added to the dogmas of a Church which already possessed far too many for the intellectual welfare of her children. The sarcasm of Father Paul is thus amply justified—'The Church would not have had so many dogmas had Aristotle written less.'²

Another consequence, hardly less mischievous, of this virtual incorporation of Aristotle into the dogmatic system of the Church, was the employment of his logical methods in order to impart a dialectical form to her teachings. The result of this was to give her conclusions a ratiocinative and trustworthy appearance they were far from really possessing, inasmuch as they were founded on premisses often purely arbitrary, or *a priori*, but of which, in any case, neither examination nor question was permitted.³ The Church conceived herself to

¹ 'Aristoteles, more Ottomanorum regnare se haud tuto posse putaret, nisi fratres suos omnes contrucidasset.' *De Aug. Sci.*, iii. ch. 4. Ellis and Spedding, i. p. 563, where see note. Bacon repeats the comparison in his *Treatise 'De principiis atque originibus.'*

² Voltaire was apparently ignorant who the 'Paul' was to whom this remark is ascribed; for speaking of its repetition by Pallavicini he says: 'Le Cardinal Pallavicini relève la maxime de je ne sais quel moine Paul qui disait plaisamment que, sans Aristote, l'église aurait manqué de quelques uns de ces Articles de Foi.'—*Dict. Philosoph.*, Art. 'Université.' Bacon says that the remark was frequently made of the canons of the Council of Trent, 'That we are beholden to Aristotle for many Articles of our Faith.'—*Apophthegms*, 275.

³ In any doctrine of development, whether religious or scientific, no truth is

possess already the needed materials: what she wanted was a scaffolding by which they might be erected into a loftier, more systematic superstructure. This the treatises included in the *Organon* supplied. Every patristic student must acknowledge the enormous difference, in respect of dialectical form, between the works of Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas and Peter Lombard, and writers of an earlier period. We have already granted that this stress on formal logic had its advantages: the ceaseless equipoise of arguments *pro* and *con*, the continued compilation and arrangement of syllogisms, the countless divisions, re-divisions and sub-divisions of every subject and of every part of each subject, besides the mental training thereby induced, often supplied the independent thinker with a standpoint of judicial impartiality which was equivalent to an avowed profession of 'twofold truth.' Nevertheless every development of the kind threatened still further to rob Christianity of its original simplicity and freedom, and to convert the teachings of the Gospel into an arid waste of logical formulas and dialectical exertions.

From the year 1366 to the time of Ramus, this growth of Peripateticism is very distinctly marked in the general history of the Church, and in the various decrees promulgated by the University of Paris. What its strength was in 1543 we have already seen in the intense excitement produced by Ramus's attack; and we shall find still further proofs of the same fact in the remainder of his life. Already Peripateticism had begun to evince no small amount of dogmatic presumption and intolerance. As a parallel to the '*Sancte Sokrates ora pro nobis*,' Aristotle, or rather his mediæval ghost, was also tacitly elevated among Christian saints and martyrs. He was styled 'the forerunner of Christ in the Gentile, as John the Baptist in the Jewish world.' He was even said to be worthy of adoration; and he narrowly escaped canonization. To some thinkers it appeared that Christianity itself was in danger of becoming a kind of hallowed Peripateticism; and Peter de Celle's fear that 'the forest of Aristotle'

more frequently lost sight of than that the whole superstructure depends upon a few elementary principles which must first be subjected to a rigid and fearless examination. Grant Father Newman his premisses, and the whole of his 'Essay on Development' becomes a geometrical demonstration, so far as any moral argument can have such a coercive force. Similarly, grant an extreme Darwinian his first principles, and the world in its present form is accounted for. It was the boast of an early Greek thinker, 'Give me plenty of sun and mud, and I will undertake to evolve creation.' Archimedes is not the only boaster of what he would effect with an impossible '*Δὸς μοῦ στῶν*.' And the fact that there are still such boasters to be found is a melancholy proof of the irrepressible tendency of able men to supercilious and absurd dogmatism.

(wild and luxuriant), 'would end by subverting the altar of Christ,'¹ would seem to have been abundantly justified.

Ramus was therefore undoubtedly acting in the interests both of Christianity and of mental freedom, when he set himself against this worship of the Stagirite. In addition to mental qualities which fitted him for the rôle of an iconoclast and a rebel against commonplace, the character of his education, his probable deficiency in purely academic teaching and discipline, his early acquaintance with the Platonic Dialogues, all conspired to free him from the trammels of Aristotelian dogma, and to urge him to do his utmost to diminish influences so disastrous to human progress. It was through no want of ardour on his part that the task was for the present hopeless. The enemy he attacked had provided against such contingencies by seeking sanctuary at the altar. From a philosophy it had become a religion; add to which, that it was now in the full prime and vigour of its age. A century later, when its strength had become impaired, and it was falling into the decrepitude of old age, the attempt, as we shall find, was successful.

Though Ramus attained both celebrity and influence by his degree-exercise and the striking circumstances attending it; in a pecuniary point of view the expenses exhausted not only his own scanty resources, but those of his family.² His poor widowed mother sold a little slice of land she was possessed of, probably 'all her living,' in order that her gifted son might be enabled to complete his education—a sacrifice compensated, as well by his subsequent good fortune, as by the tender solicitude he lavished upon her during the rest of her life. The young Master of Arts immediately commenced his life-function of teaching. He gave his first lectures at the College of Mans, perhaps under the auspices of Hennuyer, who held an office

¹ *Hist. Litt. de La France au 14^{me} Siecle* (Le Clerc and Renan), vol. i. p. 371. On the subversion of Christian theology by Aristotelian dialectics, comp. chap. on 'Semi-Skepticism of the Schoolmen.' *Evenings with the Skeptics*, vol. ii. p. 246. To Bacon Aristotle was Antichrist.

² On the expenses pertaining to the Degrees in the different faculties, cf. Waddington, p. 142, who says of philosophy, 'Ainsi pour la philosophie, la dépense des écoliers, qui avait été fixée d'abord à quatre ou six écus en tout, avait fini par s'élever à cinquante-six livres, et même davantage.' So Crevier on the point remarks, 'Pour parvenir à la maîtrise ès-Arts, il en contoît 56 livres 13 sols: au doctorat en Médecine, 881 livres 5 sols; au doctorat en Théologie, 1002 livres; le tout sans compter le prix du premier lieu de la licence, qui se mettoit à l'enchère, et qui se vendoit à proportion de l'estime qu'en faisoient lesconcurrans.' *Histoire de l'Univers.*, vi. p. 91. There were other expenses incidental to degree-taking, for which see Dr. A. Budinozky, *Die Universität Paris*, etc. pp. 42, 43.

there as well as at the College of Navarre.¹ But, soon after, associating himself with two friends whom he had imbued with his ideas on University and Philosophical Reform, the three established themselves at the little college of Ave Maria, where under the direction of Ramus they instituted courses of public lectures. 'There,' says Waddington, 'for the first time in the University of Paris, Greek and Latin authors were read in the same class. For the first time, also, the study of eloquence was joined to that of philosophy; and the poets and orators were explained together.'² These novel lectures were attended with the most brilliant success. No doubt the initiation of this varied and entertaining teaching was part of Ramus's anti-Aristotelian strategy. He, like other Humanists, had discovered the truth that breadth of culture is the best antidote to the exclusive preponderance of any one mode of thought. The crowded lecture rooms of Ave Maria were a clear proof that the teaching there supplied a want which had become urgent in the university. But like Abelard, and Pomponazzi, the young lecturer had to pay for his success. Peripatetic teachers who had spent a lifetime in expounding Aristotle's Logic could hardly view with equanimity the desertion of their meals of syllogistic dry bones for the richer and more nutritious fare which Ramus and his friends supplied. Thus was originated the bitter strife between the Aristotelians and Ramus which lasted during his life, and was instrumental in compassing his death. Concurrently with this teaching of others, our Skeptic began to unteach himself, by submitting to a rigorous analysis all the methods and acquirements which his university education had forced upon him. He estimated that this destructive process cost him as much time as the converse labour of construction had done.³

In the year 1543, Ramus published two works on the subjects of Logic and Aristotle. The first of these was called *Division of Logic* (*Dialecticæ Partitiones*), the second *Animadversions on Aristotle* (*Aristotelicæ Animadversiones*). The object of the latter was, apparently, to put forth in a deliberate form the attacks on Aristotle for which he had already signalized himself; but the spirit in which this was done had unhappily little to commend it, for the treatise is full of the blind and furious invective which marked the controversy of that age, and was also quite in harmony with Ramus's fierce impetuosity. There are some remarkable sentences in the book which

¹ According to Du Boulay, *Hist. Univ. Par.*, vi. 952. Ramus was Professor of Philosophy at these two colleges.

² Cf. M. Waddington, p. 33.

³ Waddington, p. 34, who adds, 'Grand labeur assurément, et dont peu d'hommes se sont montrés capables.'

show the author's courage and his full recognition of the perils to which he was exposing himself.¹ He boldly avows that he is not only prepared to encounter all labours and dangers in order to destroy the sophisms of his enemies, who are also enemies of the truth, but he must accept, if need be, a brave and glorious death in the cause. To take however some precautions against contingencies so dire, he dedicated the *Divisions of Logic* to the king, while he chose as patrons of the *Animadversions* two future cardinals, Charles of Bourbon, then Bishop of Nevers, and Charles of Lorraine, who, since the age of eight years had been Archbishop of Rheims, both of whom had been Ramus's fellow-students at the College of Navarre.

The excitement evoked by this second attack on Aristotle exceeded that which attended and followed his defence of his degree-thesis.² The Rector of the University was the first to step forward to vindicate its philosophical orthodoxy.³ Ramus was cited before the Provost of Paris as an enemy of religion and a disturber of the public peace, and like Sokrates, he was further charged with corrupting the minds of youth by imbuing them with a dangerous love of novelties. The cause was removed by request to the High Chamber of the Parliament, whence it was withdrawn by the king into his own courts. He appointed a Royal Commission to investigate the matter, consisting of five members; two nominated by Ramus's accusers, two by himself, while the fifth (De Salignac) was the king's own nominee, and as it happened a bitter enemy of Ramus. The issue of such an unequal contest may be imagined.⁴ Both the friends and his cause

¹ 'La,' says Waddington, in quoting these sentences, 'Ramus se déclarait hardiment l'adversaire de la routine, et le défenseur de la liberté de penser contre les partisans aveugles de l'autorité en philosophie.'—p. 46.

² This extraordinary panic is thus described in a little-known work, *A Discourse on Logomachys*, by S. Werenfels (Eng. Trans., 1717, pp. 34–37): 'This (the publication of Ramus's books) was highly resented by some of the University; who, judging if Aristotle's authority was once called in question, their own could not be over-secure, chose Anthony Govean, an eminent lawyer, for their champion, began to rage and rail, and stuck at nothing that might serve to run down Ramus's Noveltys (as they call'd 'em). When they found all this would not do, away they trudge puffing and blowing to Parliament, beg 'em by all that was good to forbid the reading of these pernicious books. Alas, Hannibal was at the gates, and nothing but death and destruction at hand! Well, even this was not thought a sufficient remedy. Nothing would serve but his most Christian Majesty Francis I. must be judge in this weighty debate (and very well worth his while you may be sure 'twas). He submitted to it, and ordered five Persons to hear the Point debated.'

³ See the Rector's own sentiments on the question in D'Argentré, *Collectio Judiciarum*, i. p. 134.

⁴ See the whole proceedings, which lasted for some time, in Waddington, pp. 41–58. Bayle, *Dict.*, Art. 'Ramus,' Note D.

were in a hopeless minority, and were equally subjected to a pitiless brow-beating. Ultimately, on the 1st of March, 1544, the three anti-Ramists (for Ramus withdrew his two friends), pronounced their decision: they determined that Ramus had acted rashly, arrogantly and impudently, inasmuch as he had tried to condemn and vilify that method of logic which was received among all nations; further, in order to benefit literature, they decreed that the book should be suppressed as completely as possible, as well as the other work entitled *Institutions of Logic*, which also contained many impertinencies and falsehoods.¹

This 'admirable refutation of a logician,' as M. Waddington terms it, was confirmed by a royal mandate, which prohibited under severe penalties the printing, publication, or sale of the books in question, and also forbade Ramus to read or lecture in any manner whatsoever, without the king's express permission; and further enjoined him to cease employing such slanders and invectives against Aristotle. The decree was received by the Anti-Ramists with a wild exultation, which seems utterly preposterous on such an occasion,² but which may serve as a measure of the enlightenment which the University of Paris possessed in the middle of the sixteenth century, as well as of the fanaticism arrayed against Ramus. 'When they had succeeded in tying his tongue and his hands, and taken from him every means of defence against the attacks of his enemies, then how noisily did they exult at so fine a victory!'³ is the sarcasm of his friend and biographer, Omer Talon.⁴ The condemnation, printed in Latin and in French, was scattered profusely throughout the city; it was

¹ The sentence is thus given by Du Boulay, *Hist. Univ. Paris*, vi. 394. . . . 'Nos diligenter perlecto libro et singulis ejus animadversis ac ponderatis sententiis ita censuimus: *Ramum temere, arroganter, et impudenter fecisse*, qui receptam apud omnes nationes logicæ artis rationem, quam ipse præsertim non teneret, damnare et improbare voluerit; ea autem quæ in Aristotele reprehendebat, hujusmodi esse, ut hominis cum ignorantiam et stuporem tum improbitatem et malitiam arguant, quum et multa quæ verissima sunt criminetur, et pleraque tribuat Aristoteli quæ is nunquam sensit, denique toto eo libro præter ea mendacia et scurrilem quamdam maledicentiam nihil contineatur: ut republicæ litterariæ plurimum nostra sententia interesse videatur librum omni ratione suppressi, unaque librum alterum *Dialecticarum institutionum*, quod is quoque aliena multa et falsa contineat.' M. Waddington, p. 47, note.

² Bayle sarcastically remarks that they made more noise than the most pompous princes did after the taking of a great town, or the winning of a very important battle.

³ M. Waddington (Latin), p. 29.

⁴ For an account of this, the most celebrated of Ramus's disciples, see Baillet, *Jugemens des Savans*, viii. 181-183.

affixed in every place where it was possible to read it: it was sent abroad to foreign universities and towns as a triumphant proof of the orthodox manner in which Paris had refuted the heretical philosopher, and vindicated her claim to the title conferred upon her, by Eustache Deschamps, 'Mère de toute science et marâtre d'herésie.' His books were publicly burnt. Comedies and burlesques were devised by the students, in which the effigy of Ramus was exposed to every conceivable indignity; just as the character of his master, Sokrates, had been misrepresented and treated with contumely and ridicule in the Athenian theatre.

Such was the result of Ramus's first attempts to introduce the Sokratic philosophy into France. To use his own words, 'I attempted to make known the philosophy of Sokrates, and discovered that I had drawn on me at the same time the miserable fate of that philosopher. To resemble him altogether, the hemlock only is wanting.'¹ One might have expected more consideration for a scholar from the court of the 'Father of Letters.' But alas! that abode of frivolity and licence had no desire to acquire or sanction the wisdom of Sokrates. The only Platonic love to which it was attached was of another description. It might have quoted Tasso's *Aminta*,

'Amor, leggan pur gli altri,
Le Socratische carte,
Ch'io in due begl'occhi apprendere quest'arte.'

There seems even some reason for believing that, if he had not been dissuaded, the 'Father of Letters' would have sentenced the man who of all in France, was best entitled to rank as an eminent 'Son of Letters,' to the Gallies!!² We must not suppose that the eager and impetuous nature of Ramus was proof against all these hostile influences that were brought to bear on him from every quarter. Nevertheless, he was compelled to submit. His biographer tells us that he was wont to recal, for his own support, the example of his master Sokrates; and when his friends bemoaned his lot, he comforted them and himself with the verses of Horace:—

'Inter spem curamque, timores inter et iras,
Omnem crede diem tibi diluxisse supremum,
Grata superveniet quæ non sperabitur, hora.'

Though Ramus was thus silenced, we have clear proof that he

¹ M. Waddington, p. 55.

² A still more striking proof of the inappropriateness of the title, 'Father of Letters,' as applied to Francis I., is furnished by the fact that he on one occasion signed letters patent 'or the suppression of printing! Comp. Mayranguet's *Rabelais*, p. 153.

managed in some way to elude his sentence. He was certainly lecturing at Ave Maria in the very year of his condemnation; but he avoided logic and philosophy, and confined himself to eloquence and mathematics. His patron, Charles of Lorraine, was rapidly rising in the royal favour, and it might have been by his influence that an evasion of his sentence was overlooked, or at least condoned. But early in 1545, an accident procured for him a more influential position in the university than that which he had lost. One of those mysterious epidemics which periodically ravaged the great towns of Europe in the Middle Ages, broke out in Paris. The university was soon emptied. Professors and students fled in alarm, and refused for some time to return to the plague-stricken city. While the university was still suffering from the depression thus produced, the Principal of the College of Presles, Nicolas Lesage, a very old man, wrote to Ramus, who had also left Paris, to ask his assistance in restoring the college, by his tuition. Ramus immediately accepted the offer; and having made conditions which secured to him freedom of teaching, he took the virtual command of that college, 'reading himself in' to his new office by an installation discourse, delivered in December, 1545. He began his lectures on the few fragments of Cicero's Republic which were then in existence, especially the well-known 'Dream of Scipio,'¹ which gave him an opportunity for expatiating on his own favourite Platonism, as well as declaiming against his arch-enemy Aristotle. Notwithstanding the paucity of students then in residence, his own lecture-room speedily became crowded. The Doctors of the Sorbonne, not relishing this rapid resurrection of their old half-slain foe, excited against him his principal, Lesage, alleging that in the agreement drawn up between himself and Ramus, he had been unfairly used. A law-suit was the consequence, in which Ramus was victorious. He obtained from the Parliament a decree which confirmed him in his office. After this episode, Ramus and Lesage seem to have lived together peaceably until the death of the latter, which took place a few years after.

Both by his personal character and his teaching, Ramus raised the College of Presles to a foremost place in the university. He associated with him his friend, Omer Talon, and together they delivered two lectures a day; Omer Talon lecturing on philosophy in the morning, and Ramus on rhetoric in the afternoon, this being the first

¹ Few fragments of classical lore held a higher position than this among those Humanists who desired to assimilate the doctrines of the Church to the teachings of heathendom. It was the standard proof, from Gentile sources, of the doctrine of Immortality. Comp. remarks on Petrarca, ante p. 116. Cf. Burekhardt, *Cultur d. Renaissance* (Germ.), vol. ii. p. 317.

time in the history of the university that two lectures on different subjects were delivered on the same day. Such academic vitality was of course, an innovation; and with other novelties in his teaching which were as inevitable to Ramus as their dull traditional usages were to his enemies, formed a continual grievance and source of complaint. But happily, a change was in store for Ramus, which for a time silenced his foes, and gave him a position of independence, in which he could not be so easily assailed. Francis I. died; his son and successor, Henry II., was completely under the control of his mistress, Diana of Poitiers, and his tutor, Charles of Lorraine. From the patronage of the latter, Ramus had already derived advantage; and one of the first acts of the new king was to issue, at the instigation of his Mecænas, a decree reversing the judgment against Ramus, and, as he himself said, 'setting free both his tongue and his pen.' This new liberty of writing was immediately utilized by re-editing the works condemned by Francis I, as well as by publishing commentaries on the Rhetoric of Cicero, Quintilian, and other Latin works which formed the subject of his lectures. Unhappily, these *viva voce* comments with which he accompanied and illustrated his classical lectures, were also novelties. Neither Cicero any more than Aristotle, was to be criticised, much less contradicted; and it was not in Ramus's nature to treat any author, no matter what his name or how sacred his authority, with tacit deference and submission;¹ whereupon was kindled another storm, provoked in the first instance by Galland, the Rector of the University, but in which Carpenterius, the life-long foe of Ramus, and finally his brutal assassin, took part. This man was chosen to succeed Galland as Rector in 1550, and commenced his duties by collecting and devising a number of petty complaints against Ramus and his fellow-professors, the chief of these being that they took upon them to expound poets and orators, instead of confining themselves altogether to philosophy—contrary to the university statutes. Carpenterius, his accuser, was also his judge; so it is not surprising that the first issue of the matter was unfavourable to Ramus. But a still brighter day was dawning. His Mecænas had succeeded to his uncle's name and dignities, as Cardinal of Lorraine, and he interposed vigorously in his protégé's favour, with the result that he was permitted to teach in his own fashion. Nor did his efforts stop there: in order to give Ramus a position of more independence, he persuaded the king to create a new

¹ The point of view from which Ramus's enemies regarded his criticism of ancient authorities is thus given by Gaillard, *Histoire de Francois I.*, vol. vii. p. 361, 'On avait été blessé de voir un Philosophe attaquer Aristote, on le fut encore de voir un Orateur attaquer Cicéron et un Rhéteur attaquer Quintilien.'

Chair for him in the Royal College (College of France), to which he was accordingly nominated in August, 1551.

With this further and important promotion, we reach the culmination of our hero's good fortune. His opening lecture, says M. Waddington, was an event. The University, the Parliament, the Clergy, were present in crowds. Ramus was equal to the occasion. Before his enormous audience he recounted in his full, well-modulated voice, and with the mingled dignity and eloquence of a born orator, the events of his life, dwelling upon the continued persecutions he had been forced to endure, but without naming or attacking any one. Explaining, rather than complaining, how, because he could not believe in all the utterances of Aristotle, he had been accused of undermining religion and morality, and because he preferred the wisdom of Sokrates, he had been termed a Skeptic.¹ He then proceeded to expound his own views on education and university reform, with such clearness, learning and eloquence, as to draw down the plaudits of the assembled multitudes. This discourse he afterwards printed; and his biographer is enthusiastic in his commendation of it. He terms it a masterpiece of elegance, simplicity and nobleness, and thinks it would be difficult to cite in the whole literature of the sixteenth century a controversial work in which courtesy and refinement are so blended with ardour and vivacity.² Thus Ramus began his teaching at the Royal College under fair auspices. Though as head of the College of Presles, he was still responsible to the university authorities, as Regius Professor he was answerable only to the king. He enjoyed, therefore, a far greater amount of freedom than he had ever done before. Here again, as at Presles, his lecture-room was thronged; nor is this wonderful, for, instead of the humdrum routine of merely reading and construing a page of some classical writer, without an attempt at explanation, which was com-

¹ The manner in which this accusation is adverted to by Freigius in his *Life of Ramus*, seems worth quoting: 'Unius primum accusationem gravissimam audivit, Ramum *academicum nominantis*, et inaudita calumnia describentis, humanarum divinarumque rerum hostem et inimicum qui de humanis divinisque legibus addubitaret, deque iis dubita re discipulos suos doceret: qui lubricos divi Augustini locos suis auditoribus ad effrenatam et impiam libertatem proponeret, qui (quò facilius incautis animis abuteretur) omnes logicas disputationes tolleretur.' Freigius, *Vita Rami*, p. 20. Comp. Bayle, *Dict.*, Art. 'Ramus,' note F. Whatever the intention of Ramus in his adoption of the Sokratic elenchus and in his thought-inspiring teachings, it may be said of him as of Sokrates, that the result of such methods must inevitably have presented the appearance of skepticism, and such an accusation was not therefore wholly unjustifiable.

² M. Waddington, p. 80.

mon among the University Professors, Ramus treated the text with a free handling, a fulness of illustration, and a variety of application which made the lecture interesting and instructive in the highest degree.¹ His fame rapidly extended in consequence, and students from foreign countries flocked to Paris, as in the pristine days of its prosperity in the thirteenth century. . . . But Ramus was soon involved in a new controversy. The Professors at the Royal College tried to initiate certain reforms in the mode of pronouncing Latin. Hitherto in France words beginning with *Qu* were pronounced as if they began with *K*,² and the letter *h* in such words as *mihi* was sounded as if written *michi*. Ramus with his fellow-Professors wishing to revert to what they believed the original method of pronunciation, adopted the method still in use in England, as well as in most Continental universities, of sounding the *qu*; and when some ecclesiastic was indicted before Parliament for adopting the new mode, they defended the cause and obtained the victory, thus adding to their other academic privileges that of pronouncing Latin in the way they thought right.

Hardly had this contest (literally *literary*) been settled, when Ramus became involved in another dispute with his old adversary Galland. The subject of this was Rhetoric, which our philosopher treated in his wonted free manner, and very differently from the

¹ Cf. De Gerando, quoted by Haag, *La France Protestante*, Art. 'La Ramée,' 'La Ramée avait un avantage sur l'enseignement de l'école; il était intelligible, ses règles se prêtaient facilement, à l'application, ses exercices recevaient un agrément toujours nouveau et une sorte de vie de l'heureux choix d'exemples auquel il avait recours.'

² This controversy of *Qu* v. *K* has received more than its fair share of sarcasm and ridicule. To Montesquieu (*Lettres Persanes*, 109) the discussion suggests the remark that 'where there are most wise men there is least wisdom.' Voltaire in his *Philosophical Dictionary* (Art. 'Université'), with what M. Waddington rightly calls his superficial learning, says, that one of the *main grievances* against Ramus was the way in which he made his pupils pronounce the letter *Q*. The many uncertainties and varieties of opinion as to the elements of Latin in the sixteenth century are described by Cornelius Agrippa, *De Vanitate*, etc., ch. iii., and they also come under the lash of Rabelais (*Gargantua*, Book I., ch. xix.). When a grammatical treatise taught that '*ego amat*' should supersede '*ego amo*,' and such a confusion of cases and persons, as '*Ego habet bonum vino*' was thought a fair caricature of the Latinity then largely in use, some reformation of the principles of the language could hardly have been superfluous. Comp. Waddington, p. 89; Bayle, *Dict.* Art. 'Ramus,' note F. Ramus also attempted to reform the orthography of the French language, by making the spelling conform to pronunciation. Cf. Crevier, *Histoire de la Univ.*, vi. p. 269. He also introduced into the alphabet *j* and *v*, which were long after called 'Ramist consonants,' and had hitherto been confounded with *i* and *u*.

slavish and pedantic methods then in use. These perpetual contentions between Ramus and his adversaries, in which, however, he was invariably the defendant, were for the most part regarded by the public outside the university with the apathy it generally bestows upon controversies which do not immediately affect its interests. Rabelais, with his cynical *laissez faire* skepticism, though disliking Galland, who had called his *Pantagruel* 'coarse fables,' could not understand the moral earnestness of such a man as Ramus, nor the real purport of his innovations. As a method of settling their dispute he makes Priapus propose to Jupiter that the two Peters (Galland's name as well as Ramus's was Pierre) should be *petrified*.¹ The subject was also utilized by Joachim du Bellay, who wrote a satirical poem on the 'Petromacy of the University of Paris.'²

Ramus would seem to have become wearied of these continual controversies, and adopted a plan of ignoring the attacks made upon him, which was more effective than the most vehement rejoinders. No sooner had Galland ceased to bait the old lion, than Carpenterius began. To neither did Ramus vouchsafe any reply. Both were clearly foes unworthy of his steel. Galland was a well-meaning, ignorant fanatic; Carpenterius was an unprincipled charlatan. Of Turnebus, who was really a learned man, and ultimately an attached friend, Ramus took more notice, and replied to some strictures which he published in a courteous and dignified manner. One reproach, in particular, which his enemies were perpetually hurling at him, is of interest, as showing their utter misconception of his character. Like every genuine free-thinker, Ramus was continually revising and modifying his own conclusions, as well as analysing and censuring those of other teachers. This skepticism trod on the heels of his conclusions as the shadow cleaves to its substance. He was thereupon accused of instability and inconstancy. The reply he offers to this charge is noteworthy as a portrayal of his own intellectual character, and indicating the mode in which he conceived all truthful research should be prosecuted. 'Certainly this inconstancy is praised

¹ *Pantagruel*, book IV. Prologue.

² As an example of this curious poem, and its continual play upon the common name of Ramus and Galland, the following quotation may have some interest: it is of Pierre Galland that the author is writing:—

'C'est ceste pierreuse response,
Plus sèche que pierre de ponce,
Plus dure que pierre marbrine,
Plus fresle que pierre ardoisine,
Plus rude que la pierre grise,
Et plus froide que pierre bise.'

—*M. Waddington*, p. 96.

and celebrated as great constancy by Horace and Apelles, as well as by philosophers, especially Aristotle, who teach us that philosophy ought, for truth's sake, to censure not only others but itself also. Nay, what is more, this constancy, thus accused of inconstancy, is the very ordinance of God and of Nature; as a difficult and slippery ascent, by continual walks along which we discover the one only path to the knowledge of science and learning set out and prepared for us. Hence I not only console myself under such an accusation, but I hope through that philosophic perseverance to obtain a new victory, without answering any injurious accusation.'¹

M. Waddington remarks that his persistent efforts and that philosophical perseverance were not sterile; he published in 1554 a magnificent edition of the *Institutions of Logic*, and in the next year his French *Treatise on Logic*, which is undoubtedly the most important work on philosophy in the language prior to Descartes' *Discourse on Method*.²

Among his other academic innovations, Ramus was the first who introduced into the University of Paris mathematical teaching at all worthy of the name. He began by applying his favourite science of Logic to the first five Books of Euclid. Nothing can show more forcibly the indomitable energy and perseverance of the man than the fact that he underwent, in combination with his usual and severe professorial work, a whole course of mathematical training on purpose to qualify himself to become a teacher of the science. By his unwearied persistency in this study he acquired the reputation of being the first mathematician of his time in France. In 1555 he published a work on Arithmetic which ran through numberless editions, and which Gabriel Naudé, in his *Advice on the Arrangement of a Library*, pronounced the best work on the subject then in existence.³ Having thus qualified himself by unceasing application, Ramus began, in 1559, a course of Mathematical Lectures in the College of France. We have some idea of the wonderful versatility and fecundity of his intellect, when we find him in that year excusing himself to his patron (while dedicating to him four different works!) that in consequence of his present difficult studies (mathematics) he was unable to evince his usual abundance; and yet, says his biographer, he found means to combine with his laborious study and tuition of mathematics the publication of a crowd of new editions, and among them

¹ M. Waddington, pp. 105, 106.

² In Cousin's opinion, this constitutes the chief merit of Ramus as a philosopher. Cf. *Fragments Philosophiques Mod.*, i. p. 14.

³ *Advis pour dresser une Bibliothèque*, p. 51 of M. Isidore Liseux's neat little reprint. Paris, 1876.

several new works: one of the latter being a Greek Grammar,¹ which for a century afterwards kept the position it immediately achieved, as the best in France. Well might Stephen Pasquier, in his review of the Royal Professors, term Ramus an 'universal mind.'²

In July, 1559, Henry II. died. Notwithstanding his own weakness of character and the many abuses of his government, his reign synchronizes with the period of Ramus's greatest prosperity. He had obtained liberty of speech and of pen, and to some extent of action as well. He had done much useful work for the University, work which it is clear no other man in France could have performed. Whatever, therefore, his opinion of Henry's character, or the defects of his rule, he could not but be personally grateful for the favour and protection accorded to himself. Nor was there a sensible diminution of this court-favour and prosperity either during the short reign of Francis II., or during the first years of his brother, Charles the Ninth's, reign. The latter monarch succeeded to the throne in December, 1560—a boy of ten and a half years—under the regency of his mother, Catherine de Medicis. One of Ramus's first duties under this reign was to represent the University as a deputation to the Court, to procure the confirmation and renewal of its privileges, and the payment of arrears of salary owing to the professors of the Royal College. So unexpectedly great was his success, that he not only received the warmest thanks of the University, but one of his most bitter enemies of former days, De Salignac, the president of the committee which had condemned his early works on Aristotle, proposed to erect a statue to him in memory of his services to the University. Nor was this the only case in which Ramus's nobility of character, his disinterestedness and moderation, converted former persecutors into warm friends and allies. Peter Galland, as well as Salignac, was on terms of cordial friendship with him before he died.

But what was Ramus's religious belief? We have seen that he was on excellent terms with the court; an eminent ecclesiastic was his 'Mecænas'; his education, surroundings, and associations were all Romish. Yet we now know enough of his intellect to feel sure that he could no more help criticising the dominant theology than he

¹ See the eulogy of this work by Lancelot: *Preface de la Methode Grecque*, quoted by M. Waddington, p. 348. Ramus wrote grammars of the Greek, Latin, and French languages. In each case his main efforts were directed to simplifying and abbreviating the rules. See preface to the French Grammar, reprinted in M. Waddington's appendix, p. 417, etc.

² Comp. the still more decisive opinion of La Croix du Main, *Biblioth Franc.*, ii. 312, 'C'étoit un homme presque universel, le plus grand philosophe qu'ait eu l'Université de Paris.'

could refrain from attacking the ruling philosophy.¹ In this, as in all other departments of human thought, he must needs 'Sokratize.' Besides, the struggles of his fellow-countrymen for religious liberty must have appealed strongly to the sympathies of a free-thinker like himself. All the presumptions of the case were so strongly in favour of Ramus being a Protestant, though unavowed, that a general opinion to that effect prevailed not only in France, but also in foreign countries. The connexion between Aristotle and the Church was so intimate that men could not understand how the implacable foe of the former could be a consistent friend of the latter. Besides, in attacking Aristotle, Ramus seemed to have allied himself openly to Luther and other Protestant leaders, who were determinedly hostile to the Stagirite and his writings. However, there is ample evidence to show that until 1561 he was outwardly a member of the Romish Church, joining in her worship, and using her books of devotion. We may well suspect that the change which then manifested itself outwardly, was internally a process of long growth. Those were not times in which a Royal Professor would be eager to proclaim the first incipient qualms of doubt as to the truth or purity of Romanism. The immediate causes which produced the change M. Waddington says were, (1) The protection which the Church gave to Peripateticism. (2) The ignorance of the Romish clergy. As to the latter, we are assured by a contemporary writer that the Huguenots then possessed almost a monopoly of the knowledge and talent of France.² Other social influences were also at work—most of Ramus's fellow professors in the Royal College were supposed to be tainted with Protestantism, while the students of his own college were in many cases the sons of Huguenot parents. Thus in the inner circle of Ramus's life the growing feeling was distinctly in favour of the new creed; nor outside that circle, among the nobility, the higher classes of the Romish clergy, and the commonalty, were the same influences wanting. Both the Cardinal of Lorraine and Montluc, Bishop of Valence, each of whom were friendly to Ramus, were supposed to have Protestant leanings. But whatever the indirect effect of surrounding influences, and however much Ramus may have been secretly connected with the Protestant propaganda which was spreading over France,³

¹ He says himself, 'My logical ardour (ardor logicus) made an incursion into the domain of religion.' M. Waddington, p. 136. Comp. the 'Epistle to the Reader' in Ramus's *Dialecticæ Libri Duo*, Ed. Dounam, London, 1669.

² Cf. M. Waddington, p. 128, with authorities cited in the notes, on the training of Huguenot ministers. See Gabriel Naudé, *Advis pour dresser une Bibliothèque*, p. 37.

³ In the beginning of Charles the Ninth's reign, it was conjectured that a

his final resolution to abandon Romanism dates from that remarkable event called the Colloquy of Poissy.¹ This was a conference between the chiefs of the Romanists and Protestants to discuss mutual grievances, and to decide on some measure of toleration. Unhappily it ended in imparting an additional acerbity to the relations of the two parties; and in a national point of view was the first of those subtle machinations of the Guises which culminated in the Massacre of St. Bartholomew. At this Colloquy of Poissy, the Cardinal of Lorraine, in answer to Theodore Beza, publicly admitted, that of the fifteen centuries which had elapsed since the time of Christ, the first was truly the 'Age of Gold'—all the others in proportion to their distance from it had gradually become more and more vicious and corrupt. Of course, the cardinal refused to admit the obvious inference resulting from such a fact. This deduction was however immediately made by leading Huguenots, and, among the rest, by Ramus.² 'It was then,' says he, in a letter to the cardinal, who had reproached him with his change of faith, 'that having to choose between those different ages, I determined to adhere to the golden age.'³ The resolution then definitively formed he lost no time in carrying out with all his wonted vigour. He set to work to inform himself more fully than he had hitherto done on the origin of Christianity. He also gradually absented himself from Mass; and by other public and open means manifested the change which had taken place in his religion. On the passing of the famous edict of January 17th, 1562,

sixth part of the whole population of France were Huguenots. In Paris itself the number was great. We are told that upwards of 8,000 used to assemble at the Pre-au-Clercs at midnight to sing the psalms of Marot's translation. Crevier, *op. cit.*, vol. vi. p. 65. Cf. H. Martin, *Hist. de France*, ix.

¹ See Martin, *Histoire de France*, ix. p. 96, etc. etc., for a full and lively narrative of this Colloquy, and the wily and hypocritical part played in it by the Cardinal of Lorraine. It may be added that Ramus was by no means the only convert to Protestantism who attributed his change to the Colloquy of Poissy. Caraccioli, Bishop of Troyes, was a convert of still greater mark. The general effect of that conference in strengthening the ranks of the Huguenots is acknowledged both by Romanist and Huguenot writers. Comp. *e.g.* Crevier, vol. vi. p. 127. Puaux, *Hist. de la Réformation Française*: Bk. IX. chaps. viii.—xiii.

² The conversion of Ramus to Protestantism by the Cardinal of Lorraine's too candid defence of Romanism is an example of those ironical reactionary conversions, of which the most celebrated literary instance is Boccaccio's well-known story of Abraham the Jew.

³ Ramus recommends the adoption of the same course to his contemporaries: 'Redeamus,' he says, 'ad Apostolorum sæculum: tempora religionis illa vere aurea fuerunt, nostra autem vix ferrea dicere possumus.'—*Comment. de Rel. Christi.*, iv. 19.

which for the first time granted to the Huguenots freedom of worship, the students of the College of Presles, in an access of Protestant zeal, though whether with or without the sanction of the Principal is not known, tore down the images and statues in the college chapel. Ramus's adversaries immediately took advantage of this act of indiscretion to raise a popular *emeute*. An enquiry into the matter was ordered, which, so far as is known, had no effect on the position of Ramus, who continued to discharge his usual functions, and to remain in Paris until the civil war broke out.

Among the subjects which occupied Ramus's busy intellect was university reform. In 1557, a royal commission was appointed to investigate this matter, of which he was a member. Its labours came to an abrupt termination, partly by internal dissensions, but mainly by political changes; but with Ramus the question took root, and four years afterwards (1561) bore fruit, in an elaborate conspectus of needed reforms, which he presented to the king.¹ This scheme seems to have dealt in a broad, comprehensive and liberal spirit with the most notable defects both in the constitution and teaching of the university; and some of its hints would not be thrown away on university reformers even of our own day. Of course no notice was taken of the petition at the time, though some of the reforms indicated by him were adopted with most beneficial effect in the reigns of Henry IV. and his successors. This draft on university reform is moreover interesting as indicating Ramus's own advance in Protestantism; for it is marked throughout by a spirit of anti-clericalism which gives one some idea of the sweeping manner in which, if he were an Englishman of our time, he would deal with clerical fellowships, headships, and other relics of ecclesiastical domination in our own universities; possibly also of the use in national education to which he would put our well-endowed cathedral bodies.² He also advocates for all poor scholars gratuitous education. With a lively reminiscence of the straits to which, in early years, his own poverty had

¹ See the analysis of this scheme in Waddington, p. 141, etc., and two extracts in the Appendix, p. 409, so also Crevier, *Histoire de L'Univers.*, vi. pp. 90-94. This author who is by no means favourable to Ramus, says of the scheme, 'Tel est le plan de réforme proposé par Ramus, dans lequel se trouvent plusieurs bonnes idées dont on a profité dans la suite. Il est aisé d'y reconnaître un homme d'esprit, mais d'un esprit libre, pourtant l'estime des lumières de son siècle jusqu'au mépris outré de tout ce qui se pratiquoit avant lui.'

² Comp. Crevier, loc. cit., who after noting the enormous expenses attending a degree in the different faculties, proceeds, 'Le vœu de Ramus est que ces exactions soient supprimées, et que les gages des professeurs soient assignés sur tant de ventes, et tant de revenus, dit il, que tiennent les moines, les chanoines, abbés, et évêques.'—P. 91.

subjected him, he pronounces it 'a scandalous thing that the road to philosophy should be closed and barred against poverty, no matter how learned or well educated it might be.'¹

On the breaking out of the civil war in 1562, Ramus was compelled to quit Paris. He obtained a safe-conduct from the Queen Mother; and took shelter for a short time at Fontainebleau; from thence, however, he was compelled to flee, to avoid his persecutors, who had discovered his retreat. After wandering about for some months, the Peace of Amboise, in 1563, enabled him to return to Paris; and, resuming his office at the College of Presles, he began immediately to lecture on Aristotle and Mathematics. Soon after his return he refused very brilliant overtures of a chair in the University of Bologna, alleging as his reason the obligations he was under to the French court,² and his desire to complete the course of liberal arts he had commenced in the College of France. Of this course there were then remaining, according to his own evidence, physics, comprehending acoustics, optics, and astronomy, without reckoning ethics, and politics. Further troubles, and a cruel death, were destined to cut short this course. In fact, the political horizon was already becoming continually darker with threatening clouds, which foreboded a storm of unusual magnitude. The Jesuits, who had succeeded in overcoming the opposition of Parliament and effecting an entrance into France, were growing in power and influence. The iniquitous compact known as the League was in process of formation. The Cardinal of Lorraine, who, had he not been a Guise, might have been termed an *anomalous* compound of learning, ambition, hypocrisy, and immorality, had withdrawn his patronage from Ramus, and become the Mecænas of his virulent enemy Carpenterius. On the whole, matters were assuming a portentous appearance for Ramus and the cause of Free-thought which he so worthily represented.

Hardly had the University settled down to work after the recent disturbances, when Ramus, together with his colleagues of the Royal College, were involved in a dispute with Carpenterius. In October, 1565, a professor of mathematics in the college died. The office was conferred, by means of a court intrigue, upon a very inferior mathematician—a Sicilian, who could speak neither French nor Latin. The professors were naturally horrified and disgusted. Ramus, as senior professor, and Dean of the College, remonstrated. In the first instance

¹ M. Waddington, p. 142.

² An extract from the letter he addressed on this occasion to the senate and people of Bologna seems worth quoting: 'Sum Gallus, et Galliae regis beneficio jam multos annos in meis stiliis sustentatus: debeo patriæ primum, deinde regi meo *me ipsum totum*.'—Freigius p. 34.

he addressed himself to the newly-appointed professor, insisting in forcible terms on the claims of the mathematical chair; but the remonstrance was unheeded. The new professor began his course, but in such a manner as to disclose his own utter incapacity, and to excite the ridicule of his audience. Finding it impossible to retain the office, he agreed to sell it to Carpenterius. The bargain was effected, no doubt, by the sanction of the court. Carpenterius, though a more able man in other respects, was still more ignorant of mathematics than his Sicilian predecessor; so this arrangement did not mend matters. Ramus, and his fellow-professor, the learned Lambricus, again represented the matter to the court and to the parliament; but ultimately with no result. Carpenterius was a bigoted and furious Catholic, and had already distinguished himself as an active adherent of the Guises and the League; add to which, he was utterly devoid of principle. Against a man so eminently qualified to be a partizan of the Guise faction, Ramus's unrivalled learning and his eminent services to the University were of course powerless. Accordingly Carpenterius, though professing with cynical candour his ignorance of mathematics, as well as of the language in which the best works on the subject were written, nay more, mocking at the science as useless child's play, was nevertheless permitted to occupy the mathematical chair in the College of France! ¹

This action of Ramus added fresh fuel to the furious animosity of his enemy,—so violent became his calumnies, so outrageous his truculence ² that Ramus was compelled to appeal to the Courts of Justice for protection. The appeal was successful; and Carpenterius was imprisoned. This still further excited his passions, which were now wrought up to an ungovernable ferocity. On two different occasions attempts were made to assassinate Ramus; and it was only his own courage and presence of mind that saved his life. On the sudden breaking out of the second civil war in 1567, he took refuge in the Huguenot camp; and on this occasion also he only narrowly escaped assassination. One cannot help wondering why, under these circumstances, he should have clung to Paris so closely as he did; but it is evident that he was quite unhappy elsewhere,—besides his was a perfectly fearless nature, despising danger and even death itself when it seemed inevitable. No sooner, therefore, was a hollow truce patched

¹ As M. Gaillard neatly puts it: 'Charpentier se maintient dans sa place et dans son ignorance.'—*Hist. de Francois I.*, vii. p. 366.

² In a letter dated January, 1571, he had the brutal candour to threaten Ramus with the vengeance in store for him: 'Nulla animi attentione consideras quis tuarum contentionum exitus esse possit.'—*Dict. des Sciences Philosophiques*, Art. 'Carpenterius.'

up than he returned to Paris in 1568, but it was to find his place at the College of Presles occupied, his own library pillaged, and his bookshelves empty. Nor were these the only bitter ingredients in his cup. The immediate future was threatening a renewal of the civil war; accordingly he obtained permission from the king to travel in Switzerland and Germany, and to visit the chief academies in those countries, intending probably to await better times and a more durable peace. But before leaving Paris he gave a remarkable proof of his disinterestedness and magnanimity. For, notwithstanding the cruel treatment he had recently undergone, he made his will—seated, perhaps, in that very study that had been wrecked, and in sight of his empty bookshelves—bequeathing the greater part of his hardly-earned savings to the University,¹ as an endowment for a mathematical professor in the College of France. Even Crevier is struck at the date of this transaction, and admits that it adds immeasurably to the glory of the Founder.

I do not know that we need follow Ramus on what might be called his triumphal progress through the chief university towns of Europe. Everywhere his fame had preceded him; and he was welcomed with open arms, not only by co-religionists as a learned Protestant, but by men of culture as a celebrated thinker on whom they had long since conferred the title of the French Plato. Several towns and princes would fain have retained him in their service by presenting him to professorships magnificently endowed. But Ramus was proof against these temptations. His patriotism combined with his attachment to the College of Presles, exercised on him an invincible, and, as it proved, a fatal fascination; and immediately on the conclusion of the peace he once more hurriedly returned to Paris and—to death.

During his absence his enemies had been busy. The influence of

¹ 'Sur ma rente annuelle de sept cents livres à l'hôtel de ville de Paris, j'en lègue cinq cents pour le traitement d'un Professor de Mathématiques' etc. See the whole document in Waddington, p. 326, and comp. Crevier *Hist. de l'Université*, vi. p. 230. It is satisfactory to learn that some of the most eminent mathematicians of France occupied the chair thus nobly founded until the suppression of the University (with much besides) in 1771, e.g. Roberval, Gassendi, etc. Guillard, remarking on this addition by Ramus to the foundation of Francis I., by whom he had been so harshly treated, says, 'Ainsi le seul savant méconner par Francois I. est le seul qui ait été digne de l'imiter et de perfectionner son ouvrage.'—*Hist. de Francois I.*, vii. p. 376. The effect of Ramus's munificence in foreign countries is incidentally illustrated by an entry in our *Calendar of State Papers*, 'Domestic,' 1581-1590 p. 169, where we read: 'Richard Hakluyt the preacher at Paris to Sir Fr. Walsyngham, strongly recommends the establishment of a prize-lecture at Oxford on the Art of Navigation, similar to the one founded at Paris for mathematics, by that most worthy scholar Peter Ramus.'

the League siding with Carpenterius, the Jesuits and the Romish fanatics of the University had procured from the court different decrees which forbade the holding of any chair in the University or the Royal College by any one except Romanists.¹ On his arrival therefore, Ramus found his Principalship at the College of Presles and his chair at the Royal College held by two men of whom history has not thought it worth while to record their names, and whom therefore M. Waddington calls 'anonymous talents.' Ramus appealed to the court, and to his former patron the Cardinal of Lorraine, urging his long services to the University, but in vain. He was compelled to retire from the offices and chairs he had so long adorned, and to which he had given an European reputation, and to withdraw into silence and a private life. As his work at Paris was now clearly at an end, he had some idea of seeking an asylum for his declining years at Geneva; and he wrote to Beza to sound him on the subject; but that redoubtable hierarch—the worthy successor of the murderer of Servetus—received the proposal so coldly that Ramus could only regard it as a refusal. However, in 1570 he experienced one parting gleam from the declining sun of his good fortune before it finally embedded itself in the murky clouds which already hovered round its setting. The Cardinal Charles de Bourbon was made Chancellor of the University; and to him Ramus applied with more success. Through his influence with the Queen Mother he obtained some modifications of the decree which excluded Ramus from the University. Without being permitted to interfere in the college teaching, he was allowed to retain the title of President; and his salary as such was doubled. His intention now was to complete the teaching he had proposed to himself by his pen, as he was unable to do so by his tongue. This scheme was favoured by the court and welcomed with enthusiasm by all men of thought and culture. With a happy reference to his name (Ramus being Latin for a branch or twig) as well as to "that golden twig"² which guided Æneas through the nether world, contemporary

¹ Of the grounds of that prohibition, which were vehemently urged by the Cardinal of Lorraine and the Rector of the University, Crevier says, 'Le Roi écouta cette sage et pieuse "representation"'—not 'reclamation,' as M. Waddington quotes the word, p. 222. See Crevier, *Hist. de l'Univers.*, vi. p. 259.

² 'Ille aureus Ramus.' Vergil, *Æneid*, vi. ver. 137, etc. Besides the pun on the name, the application of Vergilian topics and phrases to things and persons of a later age was quite in harmony with the mediæval tendency to allegorise every portion of Vergil's works, treating them—as the English Puritans did the Hebrew prophets—as authoritative repositories of types, symbols, mysteries, allegories, etc. The Commentary of Servius—the great authority in the middle ages on the subject of Vergil—is full of these allegorical renderings. See on the whole subject Prof. Comparetti's learned treatise, *Virgilio nel Medio evo*, vol. i. p. 78, etc.

poets celebrated the scheme of our philosopher as opening up unknown realms and bright vistas of science. Here *e.g.* is a rendering of one attempt of the kind :—

‘For Frenchmen all arts their own language contains,
But Pluto their god, who, wealthy, holds hidden
Many millions of treasures to daylight forbidden,
The use of these arts for Elysium retains.
We must have then to enter those regions below
To discover, and cause them in French air to grow,
The Gold Branch of our age, whence its gilding it gains.’¹

Pity that the branch, or to speak more truly, the main trunk, of French science should have been so soon and so violently lopped off, and that the gilding of that age should have been to all future ages stained with blood.

Ramus’s conversion to Protestantism, and the continual intercourse with its leaders which was one result of his tour through Switzerland and Germany, had given him a foremost position among the Huguenots. Here his freer instincts and broader sympathies brought him into collision with Beza. Ramus’s conception of a Church, as of a university, was that it should be the abode of Christian liberty. He therefore disliked the servile subordination on the one hand, and the hierarchical domination on the other, which the iron hand of Calvin had imposed on the early Huguenot churches. Among other needed changes, Ramus endeavoured to weaken the exorbitant power of the Consistories, and so to secure some measure of freedom for individual members of the Church. Further, he condemned the tendency to excessive definition which marked the doctrinal decrees and dogmas of the chief Protestant synods; especially objecting to the term ‘substantial’ which was applied by Beza to the presence of Christ in the Holy Communion. In short, his aim was decentralisation in the Church’s government, and more liberty and elasticity in her teaching. At the same time he was not a political Huguenot; his main object was to restore Christianity to the primitive simplicity and freedom of the gospel. The times were most inopportune for any movement of the kind; even had Ramus wielded the theological sceptre of Calvin or Beza; and M. Waddington, with all his sympathy for his co-religion-

¹ M. Waddington, p. 234. Comp. verses in Cayet’s *Deploration de Ramus*, Waddington, p. 319:—

‘That branch of Gold, which through Elysian fields
Guides every man whose mind to wisdom yields.’

Theodore Beza could also play on Ramus’s name, though in a manner not quite so complimentary; he calls him Ὁῶς Ἀφῶς—the scion or son of Mars.

aries, admits that the Huguenots, notwithstanding their zeal for liberty, had almost as perverted and mischievous a conception of its character as their opponents.

During the years 1570 and 1571 Ramus applied himself diligently to his desk, and new works, or re-publications of older ones, were continually proceeding from his pen. But his days were now rapidly drawing to a close. Sometime in July, 1572, he received an invitation from Montluc, Bishop of Valence, to accompany him to Poland, whither he was going on an embassy from the court of France to procure the election to the Polish Crown of Henry of Anjou. Montluc was, as I have already remarked, noted for his liberal sympathies, and enjoyed the confidence of the Huguenots. It would seem that he had reason to suspect the approaching massacre of the Protestants, and before starting gave a hint to the Count Rochefoucauld to be on his guard. His ostensible object in asking Ramus to accompany him was to procure the advantage of his superior and persuasive eloquence in the discharge of a difficult mission; though there was probably combined with that another motive, viz., to save the poor white-haired old man from the bloody fate he foresaw was in store for him. However this may be, Ramus felt compelled to refuse the offer. 'An orator,' he said, 'ought, above everything else, to be an honest man; he should never sell his eloquence.' To elevate to the throne of Poland a bigoted Catholic was a task for which he had no sympathy and to which he would lend no assistance. Montluc started on his mission on the 17th August: on the 24th sounded the tocsin of St. Bartholomew.

Into the many horrors of that crime you would not wish to enter, and I have no inclination to lead you. Ramus was probably as much surprised at the suddenness of the blow as were Coligny, Conde, and the other Huguenot leaders. We are not told where he was on the first two days of the Massacre. Probably in his study at the College of Presles. If so, he must have heard the continual gunshots, the oaths and shouts of the brutal soldiers, even if he saw nothing of streets "paved with naked and bloody corpses, and gutters running with blood."¹ No doubt Lambricus, Barrosius, and other friends came, from time to time, to tell him of the horrors which were being perpetrated around them. He knew full well that among those assassins who were imbruing their hands in Huguenot blood were some who had long expressed a ferocious hatred against himself, and therefore that his own hour was probably drawing nigh. Indeed, how could he have hoped to escape, when the best and noblest in France were

¹ Cf. Martin, *Histoire de France*, vol. ix. p. 326.

being murdered, under every conceivable circumstance of horror and indignity. However, he does not appear to have made any attempt to escape. He awaited the event with the dignified bearing, the calm, high courage, and devout serenity of mind which characterized him through life.

On the 26th of August, a band of hired assassins led by two men, one a tailor the other a sergeant, forced their way into the College of Presles, and proceeded to search the place. Ramus, anticipating what was to befall him, took refuge in his little study, which was on the fifth story; and devoted the few remaining moments of his life to prayer. The murderers were soon on his track; and, discovering his retreat they broke open the door and burst into the room. They found him on his knees, with clasped hands and uplifted eyes. When they entered he rose up, and the dignified mien and venerable presence of the silvery-haired old philosopher seemed for a moment to overawe those human furies.¹ He would have spoken to them, but he soon perceived he had neither pity nor mercy to expect. They immediately set to work to rob him, and to pillage his study. Profiting by the few seconds which these proceedings allowed him, he commended his soul to God in the words, 'O my God, against Thee only have I sinned and done evil in Thy sight. Thy judgments are justice and truth. Have mercy upon me, and pardon these wretches who know not what they do.' More he would have said, but could not. The murderers were impatient. One of the leaders of the band, with frightful imprecations, shot him in the head, and long after the bullet marks were to be seen in the wall. The other plunged his sword in his body. Blood gushed out in abundance at these horrible wounds. Then the inhuman brutes seized the half-lifeless body by the legs and dragged it backwards and forwards on the chamber floor.² Years after, visitants to the College of Presles used to be shown the room in which the greatest of its Presidents had been so barbarously treated; and were wont to express surprise at the blood-stained flooring in terms similar to those of Lady Macbeth: 'Who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?' Nor was this all; they drew the body to the window and hurled it down a height of one hundred paces into the courtyard of the college. In its descent it struck against a projecting roof, so that when it came to the ground it must have been a mere mangled mass of hu-

¹ On a previous occasion when his life was attempted by hired assassins, they were so much impressed with the courage and dignity of his presence, and the persuasive effect of the words he addressed to them, that they hastily retired, leaving him unharmed.

² Waddington (Latin Edition), p. 94.

manity, and I should say entirely lifeless. However the narrative tells us—and we must remember that it comes to us direct from eye-witnesses—the broken and partly eviscerated remains were still observed to palpitate feebly. Then there is more outrageous treatment,—to which not only the corpse of Ramus, but those of hundreds of his murdered fellow Huguenots were exposed during the St. Bartholomew. Cords were tied round his legs, and furious students, urged on by merciless professors, drew him through the streets to the Seine; where, after being decapitated, his body was thrown into the river. Nor was the insatiable fury of his enemies even yet satisfied. They gave a crown to some watermen to bring his floating corpse to the bank, and, after expending on it all the nameless barbarities their hellish imaginations could suggest, they finally hacked it to pieces.¹ . . . It is said that his friend Lambricus, when he heard the atrocious details of Ramus's death, was so prostrated by grief and terror that he immediately took to his bed, and died in the course of a few days.

There can, however, be no question that Ramus fell a victim, not to the public fanaticism which the court let loose against the hapless Huguenots, but to the diabolical rage and thirst for vengeance of his inveterate foe Carpenterius. As we have seen, Ramus, notwithstanding his Protestantism, stood high in court favour as a man of enormous learning, whose connexion with the University gave it an European reputation. He had in his possession a safe conduct from the King and the Queen-Mother at the very time when he was murdered. No; the deed, with all its nefarious circumstances, was the act of a fellow-professor in the University. He it was who gave blood-money to the brutal fiends who murdered him. If his threats and calumnies had been powerless against the undaunted old man, at least his gold and the assassin's sword might avail something. After all, it was the orthodox policy of his time and church: 'Gag when you cannot reply; kill when you cannot intimidate.' A lesson so suitable to his base, malicious and cowardly nature was not likely to be lost; but setting aside his unprincipled and cruel character, Carpenterius is a natural product of a dogmatism which not only tyrannizes over the human conscience, but attempts to justify the foulest crimes against freedom and humanity under the holy name of

¹ Comp. De Thou, *Hist. sui Temporis*, lib. iii. ad an. 1579:—'Carpentario æmulo, et seditionem movente, immissis sicariis, e cella qua latebat extractus, et post deprensam pecuniam inflictis aliquot vulneribus, per fenestras in aream præcipitatus, et effusis visceribus, quæ pueri furentes, magistrorum pari rabie incitatorum impulsu, per viam et cadaver ipsum scuticis in professoris opprobrium diverberantes, contumeliose et crudeliter raptaverunt.'

Religion.¹ When Charles IX., Henry of Anjou, and their infamous mother, could deliberately plan² a St. Bartholomew; when Pope Gregory could solemnly, as a minister of the Prince of Peace, strike a medal to commemorate the deed;³ when the Cardinal of Lorraine could celebrate High Mass in its glorification, it was not strange that Carpenterius should hire assassins to murder Ramus, and afterwards raise a pean of joy over his fiendish work.⁴ Not the less must the name of Carpenterius be placed on the black list of those fanatics who have done to death the most illustrious of the Free-thinkers of the world—among such as Anytus, Meletos, De Castel, and Mocenigo—and as such be condemned to the undying execration of humanity.

Thus perished the greatest intellect, the noblest spirit of the France of the sixteenth century. Years before, when comparing his lot to that of Sokrates, he said, 'Only the hemlock is wanting.' Alas! a more cruel fate than the poison-cup fell to his lot. With this exception, the similarity between the French Plato and his old Greek master was complete. In many respects, however, Ramus's death was, as M. Waddington calls it, rather a victory than a defeat. It

¹ When Bossuet and others twitted Calvin's followers with his murder of Servetus, Basnage boldly replied that the Papacy itself, as the system in which Calvin was brought up, was primarily liable for the deed; but while the argument must be allowed to be some palliation for Carpenterius's conduct, it is none whatever for Calvin's, because he had long abjured Romanism.

² Compare on this subject Soldan, *La France et la St. Barthélemy*, translated by Schmidt, esp. pp. 56, 69. In a paper read (April, 1881) at the Congrès des Sociétés savantes, held at the Sorbonne, M. Colombes sought to prove, from documents discovered at Simancas, that Catherine de Medicis had conceived the plan for the St. Bartholomew massacre as early as 1565. M. Colombes has since published his paper in the form of a pamphlet entitled *L'Entrevue de Bayonne 1565*; but his theory has not been accepted by more recent investigators, e.g. Herr Segesser in his *Ludwig Pfyffer und seine Zeit*, and by Herr Baumgarten in his *Der Bartholomäusnacht*. The truth seems to be that in its ultimate form, the plan did not long precede the event. How long, it is absolutely impossible to state. The Catholic leaders, well indoctrinated in the Machiavellian duplicity of Catherine de Medicis, were too astute to register their infamous schemes in unequivocal language, whether in State papers or in any other kind of written document.

³ See the rejoicings in Rome on the event. Soldan, op. cit., pp. 106, 107, and Martin, *Histoire de France*, vol. ix. An important contribution has recently been made to the long controversy as to the part which the Pope and the Roman Curia took in a public celebration, or thanksgiving service, to commemorate the destruction of so many heretics. Published under the auspices of Bodley's Librarian, a tractlet of four leaves has been photo-lithographed, of which it may suffice to give here the title, viz.: *Ordine della solennissima processione fatta dal Somma Pontifice nella 'alma città di Roma per la felicissima nova della destruttione della setta Ugonotana*: Rome, 1572.

⁴ See the horrible passages quoted by Waddington, p. 270.

was the fitting climax of a long life-battle with error, dogmatism and ignorance. He himself had counted the cost of such a dangerous career, and was prepared for the fate which befel him. It was also the close of a life singularly free from selfishness, from unworthy passions, and from vice. Amidst a society the most corrupt in Europe, Ramus maintained his purity unsullied even by the faintest breath of scandal. Surrounded by foes who would gladly have found him guilty of some one of the many depravities of his age and country, no one pretended to discover the smallest deviation from the strict path of honour, integrity, and moral purity. His life, as his death, was a genuine sacrifice to knowledge, progress and enlightenment. To knowledge, and its communication by the best possible methods, he gave, as we have seen, nearly his whole wealth. His death therefore filled with horror and consternation the friends of learning, both far and near. His fame had long since become European. Wherever learning was cultivated Ramus and his writings were known. Of the two thousand martyred Huguenots who fell at the St. Bartholomew, the name of Ramus was in many cases the only one which a distant scholar would recognize as familiar to him. Many, therefore, were the dirges, elegies, and epitaphs which bemoaned his fate; many the literary tributes which were rendered to his character and learning; many the anathemas and execrations lavished upon those who directly or indirectly had robbed the world of such an ornament.

And here, perhaps, will be a fitting place to put before you a few extracts from M. Waddington's attractive portrait of our subject:—

‘Ramus was a tall man, well made, and of good countenance. His head was large, beard and hair black; he had an enormous forehead, an aquiline nose, eyes black and piercing; his dark complexion had a student's pallor, and his features were of manly beauty. His mouth, whether severe or smiling, had an uncommon fascination; his voice was at once deep and rich. His manners were simple and severe, as was also his dress; but this simplicity did not exclude elegance. All his movements had an air of the greatest distinction. He carried his head high, walked with a stately gait, and when he spoke it was as a nobleman, according to Brantome, who boasted the possession “of a grace superior to every one.” He was full of studious ardour, and indefatigable in his work. He avoided sensual pleasures as the source of every vice and the scourge of a studious life. He treated himself harshly: sleeping on a straw mattress, rising before cock-crow, passing his whole day in reading, writing, and thinking, using in his meals the greatest possible moderation. For the greater part of his life he was an entire abstainer from wine, and only began to use it by medical advice. He had an indomitable courage—prepared

for every emergency. Without haughtiness in prosperity, misfortune could neither subdue him, nor take from him his immovable confidence in God. He knew how to pardon injuries; and had acquired the difficult habit of not answering his adversaries, trusting to a long patience to overcome the malignity of their attacks. His sentiments were noble and elevated. He never flattered any one. Content with the fruit of his labour, and not anxious to enrich himself, he refused more than once to sell his eloquence. He was always mindful of his early poverty, and aided poor scholars; distributing part of his wealth to those who appeared worthy. Every year, when he visited his native home during the vacations, Ramus carefully informed himself of any poor children who manifested studious aptitude, brought them up at his own expense, and educated them at his own college. He was warmly attached both to his country and his family, especially to his mother, whom he often visited and gave her many rich presents. He showed himself very generous to his only sister, Frances. He never forgot the help which his uncle had given him in early years, in supporting him in his old age, and leaving him part of his fortune. An enlightened piety crowned all his virtues.'

'No doubt,' says MM. Haag,¹ after quoting most of the above extracts, it is 'a fair and noble character; but no man was ever perfect. To a temper too irritable, an excessive obstinacy, and a too great readiness to contradict others, there were joined in Ramus a want of circumspection as well as an extreme presumption which was partly the cause of his misfortunes. But these defects are excused by the circumstances in which he passed his early youth, and, as Buhle remarks,² without those defects he could never have rendered the services which he conferred on philosophy and science. In other words, Ramus was, like Luther or Wiclif, an admirably qualified instrument for the task which he undertook. Leaders of men, the pioneers of human progress, must necessarily be somewhat differently constituted from the sequacious crowds which follow passively in their wake. What in an ordinary man would seem rashness, is in them elevated to the dignity of sublime courage; obstinacy, in the former case, would, in the latter assume the rank of noble persistency of purpose. It would fare ill with humanity if its Ramuses were composed of its own pliable materials, or its too brittle clay.

The main feature of Ramus's character, and that which gives us a

¹ *La France Protestante*, vol. vi., Art. 'La Ramée.'

² 'Sans ces défauts Ramus ne serait jamais devenu pour la Philosophie et les sciences ce qu'il devint en effet, et il ne les expia que trop cruellement par les persécutions qu'il endura, et par la triste mort qu'il subit.'—*Hist. de la Philosophie* (par Jourdain). ii. 537.

right to claim him as a Skeptic, is his Free-thought.¹ He is a zealous and indomitable foe of all mere authority, traditionalism and antiquity, whether in philosophy or in religion. In this respect his Degree-Thesis gives the clue to the whole of his intellectual career. And the treatment he then inflicted on Peripateticism he was equally ready to award to any system of coercive dogma. His final court of appeal was Reason, which he proclaimed to be the queen and mistress of Authority.² Hence he is continually persuading men to put aside their prejudices, the ready-made opinions forced on them by education, or any other extraneous influence, and to think freely and independently, each for himself.³ To human cowardice and neglect, in discharging this duty, he ascribes the backward state of all branches of knowledge. If men, he says, would only practise this liberty (of thought), one century would perhaps suffice to bring to perfection all the sciences. As M. Waddington remarks, a man with these free tendencies was not likely to shut himself up in the confines of a single philosophy. If Ramus professed to adhere to the Sokratic teaching, it was because this is less a system than a method, less a particular building than a master-key by which every building might be opened. When nominated Royal Professor he announced his intention to apply the Sokratic method to all liberal arts: 'I purpose to treat with all diligence the sciences after the manner of Sokrates, in searching and proving their utility and in cutting off superfluous rules and precepts.' 'All my study,' he further says, 'has been to remove from the road of the liberal arts, thorns, rough stones, and all impediments and hindrances to the intellect—to make the way plain and straight in order to arrive more easily, not only at their knowledge, but to their use and practice.'

We have thus indicated the twofold character of Ramus's teaching: severity of analysis, simplicity and brevity of synthesis. The mere enunciation of these principles is sufficient to reveal their uncompromising hostility to the thoughts and methods of the sixteenth century,—to the ponderous systems of the Schoolmen, the endless quibbles, subtleties and trivialities of mediæval logicians, the numberless

¹ 'Libertatem animi excelsam, amabilem, gloriosam; servitutem autem, caducam, detestabilem odiosam semper esse duxi,'—*Dialecticæ Partitiones*.

² 'Nulla auctoritas rationis, sed ratio auctoritatis regina dominaque esse debet.'—*Scholæ Math.*, l. iii. p. 78, 'Omnes in eadem nave homines sumus, natura nempe rationis participes; gubernaculum rationis bono animo regendum suscepi,'—*Dialecticæ Partitiones*.

³ Ramus shrewdly urges against the Aristotelians the example of their own master in this respect. Had Aristotle not exercised his intellect independently of prior systems of Greek thought, etc., where would have been his *mastership*, and what value could be attached to his works?

technicalities, rules and premisses which oppressed every department of human investigation. Ramus, with the Sokratic elenchus as his chosen weapon, was in the position of a powerful backwoodsman who, armed with his axe, cuts his way step by step into the dark recesses of some primæval forest. He let in the sunlight where it was not only never before seen, but where its presence was deemed an intrusive profanity. The ghosts, dragons, hobgoblins, and other obscene animals supposed to tenant those hidden regions he either proved to be fictitious or put to flight. Nor was he content with merely clearing a path for himself and his own immediate purposes. In every direction throughout the enormous forest he applied his axe, clearing away the underwood, lopping off freely and ruthlessly intervening branches, and removing all obstructions to the free march of humanity through the length and breadth of the overgrown seclusion. Unfortunately no successor to the brave pioneer immediately appeared, so that the paths which he cut again became partly overgrown after his death. Still the marks of his axe were discernible for some generations, and when other woodmen, such as Bacon and Descartes, proceeded to re-attempt a similar task, they found they could not do better than follow, in most cases, the tracks which Ramus bequeathed to them.

But Ramus was by no means exclusively or even mainly a destructive or a negative skeptic; he possessed a large share of constructive instinct as well. As with other academics, his skepticism was but the needed preliminary to a reformed dogmatism; but his modesty and caution in building up were as conspicuous as his vigour in pulling down; his imputed inconstancy, in revising and modifying his own conclusions, was a frequent subject of reproach among his enemies. We have seen, too, how earnestly he endeavoured to compass the whole round of the liberal arts, and to introduce into each his favourite principles of simplicity and usefulness. The service he accomplished for logic, for rhetoric, for grammar, for mathematics, and so far as he could, for physical science and theology as well. Each science was overweighted with dogmas, hypotheses, *à priori* conclusions, which were either unfounded, unimportant or incomprehensible, or at least utterly useless for the practical needs of mankind. Next to truth in all scientific principles, Ramus endeavoured to ascertain their practical scope and utility. His stress on the latter point procured for him the nickname of 'Utilitarian' (*usuarius*): certainly an honourable designation in the sixteenth century, when the real *use* of principles and dogmas seemed to be the very last thing of which their devisers and assertors took cognizance. There was then no danger, nor was Ramus at all likely to be guilty of the error, of pushing the principle to excess.

In order to comprehend with some degree of completeness Ramus's many-sided intellectual activities, we must consider him: (1) as a Humanist, (2) as a Theologian. These two aspects make up the sum total both of his life and character. For the first half of his life his mental energies were devoted mainly to a study of the ancients, and to the acquisition and teaching of secular learning. His later years, especially after his conversion to Protestantism, were very largely taken up with theological and Biblical studies. These two directions also summarize his intellectual tendencies; and each throws no small amount of reflected light on the other. Ramus's Humanism was tempered by religion; and his religion was both corrected and corroborated by his Humanism.

1. Ramus's attitude to classical learning is strikingly illustrated by his logical method. When he was induced, by the study of Plato, to doubt the infallibility of Aristotle's logical treatises, the course he adopted was this: he did not for a moment question the utility of the science, nor yet its validity when properly defined; he required only its re-construction on a freer and broader basis. In order to effect this he collected from ancient poets, orators and historians their methods of ratiocination. These he investigated and classified by a kind of induction, until he had determined the various processes which the reason employs in arriving at its conclusions.¹ Hence every rule of his logic is a generalized inference from so many classical precedents. In short he estimated reason and its methods not as the prerogative of any one thinker or series of thinkers, but as the common possession more or less of all humanity. Like a biologist, who determines the characteristics of living beings from the comparison of their extinct ancestors of the same type, Ramus in his science of

¹ The general character of Ramus's logic was what Prantl would have called the 'Ciceronian-rhetorical.' He regarded it not so much as a method of truth-discovery, as of persuasion and exposition; though he is not always consistent in this respect. That this conception of logic leaves more room for the exercise of free thought and enquiry than the methodical definitions and arid rules of Aristotle, need hardly be stated. It allows the mind to range over the whole field of literature, instead of confining it to formal methods. Hence it has been a conception of logic cherished by many free-thinkers, both ancient and modern. This was, as Prantl has pointed out, the character of Abelard's logic; indeed he thinks that if Abelard had lived in the sixteenth century he would have been a disciple of Ramus (*Logik*, ii. 188, comp. Remusat's *Abelard*, ii. 96). It was also the conception of logic most affected by the Italian Platonists, as *e.g.* by Laurentius Valla. The earliest definition of its method is that given by Dionysius the Thracian, who thus defines grammar: ἐμπειρίαν ὑπάρχειν τὴν γραμματικὴν τῶν παρὰ ποιηταῖς καὶ συγγραφεῦσιν λεγομένων. *Sext. Emp. adv. Gram.*, op., vol. ii. p. 30. Comp. on the character of Ramus's logic, St. Hilaire, *La Logique d'Aristote*, ii. p. 246.

reasoning sets himself to discover the methods of the present by a searching scrutiny of those of the past.

But in this deference to the logical modes of classical writers, Ramus never lost sight of his own independence. It was only when the conclusion approved itself to his own reason and investigation, that he carefully computed the stages by which it had been reached. There was no deference to an opinion of Plato or Cicero merely because he had uttered it; no inclination to shelter himself or his convictions under the unquestioned authority of great names. Ramus was indeed singularly free from the servility that marked other Humanists—the reverence for antiquity because it was antique, and the excessive adulation of trivial sayings and unimportant teachings for the sole reason that they emanated from classical authors. He brings to his investigation of secular antiquity, the principle he fearlessly applied to sacred antiquity, *i.e.* Rationalism. This is the test by which he tries all coinage, whether from the mints of Athens and Rome, or from that of Palestine. Every coin must have the image and superscription as well as the genuine ring of truth, before he admits it to his cabinet. So long as it seems to him to possess these paramount qualities, he is quite indifferent as to its origin.

This mode, of analyzing thought-processes, rather than passively accepting fully formed opinions and sentiments, coincides with Ramus's practical tendencies. The thoughts of the ancients had a double value, when they were adopted as the framework or skeleton-outline of the thought-methods of all times. Men thus became possessed not only of the exquisite casting, but also of the mould into which the metal had been run. The dialectical form of thought was indeed more valuable than any particular thought it had aided in shaping, because it might be employed for any indefinite number of ratiocinations. Ramus thus made classical thought a present actuality; all its best expressions became in his hands living organisms, not mere dead corpses; he directed attention not so much to the writings of the ancients, as to the minds whence they were evolved; and hence rendered Humanism and its reverence for antiquity a worship of the spirit rather than of the letter.

Ramus also endeavoured persistently to reconcile Humanism with Christianity. As a rule, Italian Humanism was a culture lying apart from all religious considerations. In extreme cases it was a simple Paganism, which did not reject so much as ignore Christianity. Aristotle, Cicero, Plato, and other giants of antiquity were regarded as authorities quite powerful enough to stand alone, and not needing corroboration or sanction from the dictum of any sacred book or ecclesiastical authority. This as we know was the position of Pe-

trarca as it was also of Montaigne. They accepted the utterances of Gentile philosophers and poets as autocratic self-sufficient representations of truth. They made no attempt, in any comprehensive spirit, to reconcile heathen opinions with the doctrines of Christianity, nor even to discover a common standpoint whence they could be surveyed with impartiality. There was hence an essential duality in their mental formation. Their intellects dieted on Plato and Cicero, at least circumscribed by classical culture, was like a circle whose circumference included but a small segment of the other circle of their Christian faith; even if the former could be said to traverse the latter at all. Now it was this attempt at unifying the beliefs and thoughts of Pagandom with the generally accepted doctrines of the Christian Church, that gave its peculiar flavour to the classicalism of Ramus. The universe of thought and of truth was to him essentially one admitting of no real difference or dichotomy. The subdivisions employed by Christianity of sacred and profane, heathen and Christian, found no place in his creed except as successive stages of a common evolution. Both Paganism and Christianity presented themselves to him under similar aspects. In both he discerned corruptions and falsities to be discarded, as well as truths and excellencies to be appreciated. His standpoint of intellectual independence furnished him with a neutral territory or judicial court, wherein the claims of all antagonistic systems could be impartially adjudged; and before the supreme tribunal of his reason and spiritual apperception, Christianity and heathenism being arrayed, are ultimately declared to be in essentials closely related, nay, in some few particulars, to be even identical each with the other.

2. The nature of this position will be more exactly appreciated by a cursory glance at Ramus's theology.¹ The general course of his theological development I have already hinted. Calvinism, as the predominant type of the Protestantism of the time, was that form of Anti-Romanism with which he first came in contact, but his free instincts soon recoiled from a dogmatism hardly less harsh and imperious than that of Rome. His own independent inquiries led him, as I have remarked, to the conviction that the historical development of Christianity was a 'facilis descensus' of deterioration and corruption. Ultimately he discovered, both on the question of Church government and Christian doctrine, considerable affinities with the large-hearted and semi-rationalist Zwingli, many of whose teachings he in fact adopted.² But the real builder of his theology, as of his philosophy,

¹ On the subject of Ramus's theology see the able monograph of P. Lobstein entitled *Petrus Ramus als Theologe*, Strassburg, 1878.

² Comp. P. Lobstein, op. cit., pp. 38, 39.

was Ramus himself;¹ and in my judgment he may be congratulated on the result. His Christianity, considering its surroundings, and the elements out of which it was evolved, was of a singularly free, enlightened and tolerant character. Revelation with him was no narrow, exclusive idea—a special determination of Providence for the behoof of a fractional part of humanity. He regards the term as synonymous with truth and reason. Evidences of Christianity he finds everywhere in Nature and in classical antiquity, as well as in the Bible and the Church. Just as, in his logic, he infers laws of thought from the ratiocination of all great thinkers indifferently, so he proves the truths of Christianity, all at least that he regards as essential, by adducing the similar teachings of heathen authors.² Most of the dogmas of Reformation Protestantism he no doubt retained; but he explains them for the most part in a free and rationalizing spirit. His stress on utility and practice made him naturally impatient of doctrines which, however true, only possessed a speculative character. Theology he rightly defines as a ‘*Doctrina bene vivendi*,’³ in contradiction to the notional dogmas of the Churches, and to the endless theorizing of the Schoolmen. He also held the idea, perhaps derived from ‘the Everlasting Gospel’ of the Abbot Joachim, of a progressive revelation, asserting that the Old Testament was the dispensation of the Father, the New Testament that of the Son⁴—though without discriminating between the latter and the dispensation of the Holy Ghost, as the adherents of the Everlasting Gospel did. Ramus also distinguished between the older and newer dispensations in respect of their origin and destiny; maintaining against the narrow local range of Judaism, the universalism of Christianity.⁵ His free thinking proclivities are also marked in his dislike to excessive definition. Just as he found fault with Beza’s term ‘substantial’ as applied to Christ’s presence in the Eucharist, so he complained of the gross and material representations of the Trinity which were common to the religious conceptions, artistic and otherwise, of the time; wherein, as he said, it was only with extreme difficulty the doctrine could be apprehended by the mind.⁶ His repugnance to an excessive supernaturalism is also shown by other traits in his theology, *e.g.* he merged the event of a final judgment in the general belief in immortality.⁷ Like all

¹ The autonomous character of Ramus’s Protestantism is incidentally illustrated by the fact that, although he was acquainted with all the Protestant leaders of his time, he only names one of them in his Commentaries on the Christian religion, viz. Peter Martyr.

² Comp. P. Lobstein, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁶ Waddington, p. 359.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁵ P. Lobstein, p. 31.

⁷ Comp. P. Lobstein, p. 32.

the reformers, Ramus laid great stress on the Bible as the fount of genuine Christianity, and the deliverer from Papal tyranny. The books of the Bible, he thought, should take the places of the ponderous tomes of the Schoolmen. In his project of university reform, provision is made for the study of the Old Testament in Hebrew, and of the New Testament in Greek. He also contemplated the translation of the whole Bible into French.¹

Nothing in Ramus is more surprising to us, and nothing struck more forcibly his contemporaries, than the wide sweep of his studies. His restless and penetrating eye looked out over the whole domain of human knowledge; and his speculations, aspirations and desires were continually in advance of his powers.² He resembles, in this respect, not a few of our skeptics, of whom a tendency to eclecticism may be said to be a very general characteristic. Indeed, to a free-thinker, a high standpoint and a wide horizon is the most absolutely necessary of all his requirements. But the point on which Ramus differs from the typical extreme skeptic is his tendency to construct. A brief comparison with his contemporary, Montaigne, will enable us to determine his position in this respect. Both set themselves against dogma, systematic beliefs, and authoritative dicta of every kind; but while Montaigne did this with the cynical contemptuous *insouciance* of a Pyrrhonist, Ramus set about it with the sober, methodical, truth-loving spirit of an Academic. Montaigne despaired of truth. Ramus despaired only of finding it by the antiquated processes then employed for the purpose; for the rest, he not only believed devoutly in its existence, but endeavoured to point the road to its abode. Montaigne, while secretly employing, openly reviled Reason; Ramus thought Reason, as we have seen, the supreme Court of Appeal on matters of human knowledge, and superior to all authority. No doubt most of these contrasts are explicable by the single fact that Ramus was an earnest, God-fearing man, while Montaigne's nature was too superficial to understand what earnestness of any kind could possibly mean. Ramus, *e.g.* as soon as he found out the falseness of Romanism, immediately renounced it. While Montaigne, though ridiculing secretly its dogmas, would yet cross himself when he sneezed, and was willing to kneel and kiss the Pope's toe. Ramus's fount of religious truth was the Gospels: Montaigne drew all his wisdom from heathen sources. In a word, Montaigne was at

¹ Comp. Jules Barni, *Les Martyres de la Libre Pensée*, p. 134.

² Cf. Nicéron, *Memoirs*, xiii. p. 286: 'Il avoit un génie forte vaste et un sçavoir profond; il avoit embrassé toutes les Sciences, et ne proposoit pas moins que de les reformer toutes; mais c'étoit une entreprise que surpassoit ses forces.'

heart a Pagan, while Ramus was a devout, but enlightened and rational Christian. But with all these contrasts, the men were alike on many points of great importance. Not only were both admirers of the Sokratic method, and opponents of dogmatism, but they were further alike in their broad, generous sympathies for every branch of human culture. They also resembled each other in their detestation of every form and degree of intolerance. Both were free-thinkers to the backbone, though one thought freely as a philosopher, and the other as an easy, good-natured cynic. Both bemoaned the stormy times in which their lots were cast, and looked onward to the ameliorations of the future. Finally, both contributed, each from his own standpoint and in his own way, to the advance of modern culture. In point of general influence there can be no comparison between Ramus and Montaigne. As a disseminator of free-thought, the *Essais* of the latter outweigh the seventy and odd works of Ramus which are enumerated by M. Waddington. It was a popular book pitted against an elaborate but still rather formidable scheme of philosophy.

Ramus was, we must remember, an Academic. I don't mean now in the sense of his sharing the skeptical principles of the old Greek school of that name, but I employ the term in its general sense as descriptive of the tastes, feelings and sympathies which are engendered by, and find a home within university and college walls. Without sharing the customary dogmatism, he was still apt to regard things from the point of view of a professor. His methods, with all their instincts of freedom, show a trace of *ex cathedrâ* formality and positiveness; his style, refined and scholarly, is yet not without a suspicion of *hauteur*. The man was clearly not made for popularity, in any large sense of the word. Crevier tells us that he inspired either extreme affection or fanatic detestation—no intermediate feeling—a description confirmed equally by his history and his writings, for both agree to represent him as a singularly noble, dignified and lofty character, yet, as such persons usually are, somewhat austere, reserved and cold. Although therefore in point of elevation of character Ramus was superior to Montaigne, yet in the influence both exercised on free-thought he was immeasurably his inferior. Ramus's works were, as a rule, known only to academies and schools: Montaigne's *Essais* soon became a household book in most countries of Europe.

To his constructive instincts Ramus owes the glory of being a founder of a school. Years after his headless corpse was hacked to pieces on the banks of the Seine, his system of philosophy, and the various expository works in which it was treated, were received

by enthusiastic disciples, in various seminaries of Europe, with a subserviency which the old foe of Aristotelian dogmatism must, had he been alive and consistent, have disallowed. Ramism found numerous partisans,¹ in France, Germany, Switzerland, Holland, England² and Scotland; and even in Spain and Italy.³ It became for a time the philosophy *par excellence* of Protestantism, in opposition to the Peripateticism of Romanism. In the march of modern culture it served at least the purpose of a transition system, bridging and connecting Scholasticism on the one hand with the modern scientific methods of Bacon and Descartes on the other.

In any record of European free-thought the name of Ramus must always occupy a prominent place. His whole life was a long, earnest struggle for liberty in every department of human faith and knowledge, and his death a veritable martyrdom in the same holy cause. Philosophy, as well as religion, has her own martyrology; Free-thought has its canonizations; human liberty her precious records, which she may well style her *Acta Sanctorum*. Among the most revered names in her canonization-roll—one of the highest lives in her *Acta Sanctorum*—one of the noblest deaths in her martyrology—are the name, the life, the death, of Peter Ramus.

* * * * *

MRS. HARRINGTON. What a painful story that of Ramus is! When we were discussing among ourselves M. Jules Barni's chapter about him, we tried to realize what his feelings must have been, shut up in his study on the two first days of the massacre, and no doubt expecting momentarily his own doom. The subject took such a strong hold of Florence that she wrote some stanzas on it.

¹ Among the adopters of Ramism were his fellow skeptic Sanchez, and Arminius. Through the latter Ramus may be said to have exacted a posthumous retribution for the repudiation he experienced in his lifetime from Calvinism. Arminius contributed in no small measure to free modern Christianity from the intolerable yoke of the Genevan Hildebrand, and to lay the foundations of a more liberal and tolerant theology. Cf. Nicholl's *Life of Arminius*, vol. i. pp. 23, 55.

² Of the two great English Universities, Cambridge was for many years the home of Ramism: Oxford, as might have been expected from its blind devotion to Aristotle, its relentless opponent and persecutor. In 1574, *e.g.* a young logician named Bare-bone, essaying to attack the Philosophy of Aristotle after the principles of Ramus, was degraded by the Senate, and forced to quit the University.

³ This is proved by Waddington, though denied by Brücker and Bayle.

TREVOR. By all means let us hear them, Miss Leycester. I have inflicted so many pages of prose upon you that I am sure poetry will be a welcome relaxation.

MISS LEYCESTER. Perhaps poetry might, Dr. Trevor; but that is a title I dare not claim for my humble attempts. However, I have no objection to read them to you—(reading from her pocket-book):—

REFLECTIONS OF RAMUS IN HIS STUDY IN THE COLLEGE OF PRESLES,
AUGUST 24TH OR 25TH, 1572.

1. I hear it still—that storm of death and hell,
The shriek of agony—the demon-yell—
Now sinking into mournful whispers low,
Now rising high in loud and murd'rous swell.
2. As when in shipwreck—'mid the angry din
Of fierce devouring waves—to shore comes in
In discord ghastly—screams of drowning men
So mingled—sounds this hurricane of sin.
3. So many gone, with whom I bent the knee,
Gulfed in the surges of yon blood-stained sea;
While I upon this islet wait, and watch
The rising waters, till they bear off me.
4. Unfinished my life's work!—Is it then so?
Must not both work and life together go?
I meted not life's term; why mete its work?
Enough, if finished,—what God gave to do.
5. Beyond the present—gloomy, grim and dread,
I can discern—for man and truth outspread
A nobler future, when both shall be free,
And falsehood—like its victims now—be stark and dead.
6. Do not the falling leaves—the trembling prey
Of winter's furious blast—their fear allay
With hopes to come, and dreaming of next spring,
Say, 'Though we die, all will be green in May'?
7. In hope then, God! Thou God who canst not lie,
Hope of Thy truth to come—to Thee I fly
Boding, not fearing death—I wait mine hour,
For Truth I've lived, for Truth too I can die.

MRS. ARUNDEL. Thank you, Miss Leycester. No doubt you have rendered into your quatrains the most obvious of the feelings which must have flitted through Ramus's mind on

those two awful days. But if you will permit an irreverent criticism on your verses, I should be inclined to take exception to Ramus's strong confidence in the future, regarded as a compensation for present misery. As a rule I distrust the genuineness of those extra-heroic sentiments. The common feeling of humanity on the point seems to me better expressed by Mrs. Browning's 'Aurora Leigh.' You remember the lines—

‘It had not much
Consoled the race of mastodons to know
Before they went to fossil, that anon
Their form would quicken with the elephant;
They were not elephants, but mastodons.’

TREVOR. On the contrary, Mrs. Arundel, Miss Leycester has not only expressed what is an undoubtedly strong feeling in all high-souled, magnanimous, and unselfish men, but in this particular case of Ramus she has merely given a poetic form to what were clearly his own sentiments. Here are his own words on the point. They form part of a discourse which he delivered to his class in 1563.¹ After dwelling on the misfortunes which had attended his own search for truth, he proceeds: ‘Although these trials have been to me very hard and very bitter, I cannot recall them without a deep feeling of joy and of pleasure. Yes! I feel happy in the thought, that if I have been beaten down by the tempest, if I have had to encounter so many dangers, my misfortunes will at least have served to make the road easier and more certain for you.’

MISS LEYCESTER. Though its general purport is the same, that is not exactly the passage that I had in mind when I wrote the lines. There is another which I found quoted in Martin's *History of France*, in which, like Bacon on his Mount Pisgah, Ramus scans with prophetic and enraptured eye the distant future of science and humanity, and sees men in a state of knowledge and refinement very different from his experience of them. The passage is this: ‘I can bear without suffering and even with joy these calamities, when I contemplate in a peaceful future, and beneath the sway of a

¹ M. Waddington, p. 257.

more humane philosophy, men who have become better, more polished, and more enlightened.'¹

HARRINGTON. We must hope too that humanity has made some progress in disinterestedness and nobility of mind since 'mastodons went to fossil' (if at least primitive man was contemporary with the mastodon). As a general principle Mrs. Browning's teaching seems to me not only ethically imperfect, but psychically untrue; for surely intense sympathy with the ills of the present incites and increases, rather than excludes, eagerness of hope for the future.

ARUNDEL. In your Essay, Doctor, you might have made, I think, a strong point as to the likeness between Sokrates and Ramus, in their last hours. Ramus in his study serenely expecting his murderers, and Sokrates in prison calmly awaiting the arrival of the sacred ship from Delos.

TREVOR. Very true; that point escaped me—though of course there are several such instances among the martyrs of philosophy. Giordano Bruno, *e.g.* in the Inquisition Prison at Rome, was seven years awaiting death; and Vanini at Toulouse expected it long before it came. Campanella, too, continually thought that his numerous imprisonments and tortures would end in death.

MRS. HARRINGTON. What a shame that Theodore Beza should have refused Ramus an asylum at Geneva when he was so surrounded by perils.

TREVOR. No doubt; but Beza, the successor to Calvin's despotism, shared also his autocratic and intolerant spirit; he might have been dubbed Calvin II. His cruel treatment of Clement Marot and Henry Stephen proves him to have been a fanatical bigot. After all, what could you expect of a religious teacher who deliberately pronounced liberty of conscience to be 'a diabolical dogma'? Ramus was unwelcome to him both as a philosopher and a theologian. One of Calvin's life labours had been to repress the nascent Free-thought which is inevitable to Protestantism and inquiry. Beza might have feared that Ramus, with his liberal sentiments and wide sympathies, would have formed a nucleus, round which the

¹ Cf. M. Waddington, p. 11.

freer opinions and aspirations of the Huguenots would have converged. Even now, Huguenot and other writers¹ pretend that Ramus's object in opposing Beza was to found a party among them, and call it by his own name—an absurd allegation which M. Waddington triumphantly refutes.

HARRINGTON. Most thinkers of the present day must, I conceive, regret that the Reformation was not more under the control of its moderate leaders and broader thinkers, such men, *e.g.*, as Erasmus, Melancthon, Zwingli, and Ramus. As it is, the Protestant Churches started on their march of independence and progress too much burdened with theological system; and all their subsequent history to the present day has been in the direction of dogmatic relaxation. Just as an inexperienced traveller, starting on a long journey, encumbers himself with all kinds of useless packages, which by and by fall off, and he carries his real necessities closely packed in a small knapsack on his shoulders.

ARUNDEL. Your illustration, Harrington, appears to me misleading; not only did the Protestant Churches start with too many dogmas, *because* they were scions of a Church with enormous dogmatic possessions, but they were compelled at starting to consult the various views and wants of all their respective members. It was not therefore the setting forth of one man on a journey, but of a large and varied company. Suppose such a promiscuous company were starting, we know well what would happen; and how all kinds of superfluous luxuries would have to be stowed away as indispensable necessities. One man must have his store of Liebig's extract, another his tins of preserved meat, another his private medicine chest, till by and bye the common luggage would assume a portentous size. What could such a poor dogma-laden Church do?

MISS LEYCESTER. I will tell you. She might say to all her members, 'I will provide necessities—the simple articles of diet needful to preserve health, *e.g.* bread, meat, etc.—such things as all must have. Those who, for whatever reason, as weakness or fastidiousness, require artificial food, luxuries,

¹ *E.g.* Bayle and Crevier.

medicines, must provide them out of their own pockets, and incorporate them into their own personal luggage.' . . . Whereas what Churches do, or rather what they did in time past, was this: They pretended to meet every taste, every requirement, and every caprice among their motley crew of members out of their common fund of dogmas; and the simple fact of any given Church doing this, enables every puny valetudinarian to come forward and say to his healthy brother, 'You must take my nostrum, or you cannot be right—you must diet yourself as I am doing, or you will most infallibly be ill. The Church would never have put all these various medicines and articles of food into her common store, unless she thought them absolutely necessary for *all her members*.' Let Christian Churches provide the simple bread of the Gospel. Let them prescribe for every man the two great commandments of the Law of which the Master said, 'This do and thou shalt live,' instead of wasting their strength on metaphysical subtleties and doctrinal refinements. . . . And that suggests to me the remark that the Protestant Church, starting from its mother of Rome with unnecessary luggage, requires to be amended; for it should have been stated that the same man who then thought so many packages and parcels necessary, was brought up originally with very primitive habits and on an exceedingly simple diet; but living so long at Rome enervated his character, so that he came to imagine superfluous luxuries to be absolute necessities.

ARUNDEL. In idea your theory may be true; but its practice is another matter. For the whole issue turns on the question, What are necessities? or reverting to our simile (which does not however quite run on four legs, because physical necessities probably vary more than spiritual) it is a question of constitution, habit, digestion, and assimilation. Some people can, I suppose, digest Liebig's extract better than household bread. . . . I have no sort of doubt in my own mind that the stress of Christ's teaching is on moral duties and simplicity of worship, while it is clearly opposed to ritualism. Yet if He had not provided some formal rites, such as, *e.g.*, the celebration of the Lord's Supper, I think Christianity would have been defective both as to the symbolical bond of union which such

an institution should possess, and also in regard of its provision for weaker members.

TREVOR. In your comparison, Arundel, of the starting of the Protestant Churches to a kind of 'personally conducted' excursion, in which the tastes of the many had to be consulted, you do more than justice both to Luther and Calvin. The systems they formulated and enjoined were merely the operation of their spiritual faculties on the Bible-text. They no more thought of consulting the needs of their followers, except as they themselves determined what those needs should be, than Napoleon consulted the needs of France in determining what his own course should be. Both Luther and Calvin were not over-respectful even to Holy Writ when any of its statements came into collision with their own views. Your comparison would hold better of the Church of England, in whose origin and constitution the attempt to adapt itself to divergent beliefs and different schools of thought is clearly traceable. But leaving the question of their origin, what is important now is that Churches which possess elaborate creeds, articles and formularies should agree to regard them mainly as 'Articles of Peace,' and interpret them with the elasticity which is requisite to respect individual rights of conscience and the results of modern scientific inquiry, remembering that to a progressive Church, as to an advancing army, too many *impedimenta* are fatal to its mission.

ARUNDEL. I, of course, fully appreciate the latitude which pertains to our Church by reason of the manifold influences and interests which co-operated in her birth, and have to some extent grown with her growth. Nevertheless, though I know the wish is useless and perhaps absurd, I cannot help sometimes making it: that its original dogmatic requirements had been limited to those beliefs on which, as we know from His own words, Jesus Christ Himself would have insisted.

HARRINGTON. You will find in Mr. Theodore Martin's *Life* an admirably wise remark of the late Prince Consort on this very point. It is to the effect that the zeal of her founders, in legislating for posterity, prevented the Church of England from sharing the development which the State has derived from

the broad principles of Magna Charta.¹ With that remark I cordially agree; and the twofold liberties of the English Churchman may be thus paralleled. His civil liberties are a continuous growth 'broadening down from precedent to precedent' of the principles of Magna Charta. His liberties as a Churchman have to a considerable extent been acquired by the converse process of ignoring articles and enactments which ought never to have been made, or at least raised to the position they occupied. In either case there is development: in the first it is that of a house built with an eye to the future into which enlargements and modifications are easily introduced; the other is not unlike the gradual transformation of a feudal castle to meet the very different wants, habits, refinements, etc., of the present day.

MRS. HARRINGTON. Well, and why not let the ancient feudal castle retain its old form, merely to show in what sort of houses our ancestors liked to live; we might take up our abode, *e.g.*, in the inhabitable parts, and leave the dark towers and dungeons to themselves.

HARRINGTON. That is precisely, I suspect, what a good many people are doing. The formal abrogation of old dogmas is difficult even when most desirable. If they are found antiquated, untrue, or opposed to the milder spirit of modern enlightenment, they are quietly ignored. How many religious controversies, *e.g.*, have in past times excited men's passions to the verge of madness on which it would be impossible to revive the slightest interest in the present day.

MISS LEYCESTER. So the young man who started from home, or rather from Rome, with all that luggage, though he has found that he does not want nearly so many things as he thought, still travels with the old family valise or 'imperial' with which he set forth. Only when you look inside, it is

¹ 'It was a premature decision on the details of Church government and doctrine, in the absence of a broad and leading principle, and the fact of their being finally settled for posterity by those into whose hands the conduct of the Reformation fell, which prevented the Church of England from participating in that constant and free development which the State has been able to derive from the broad principles of Magna Charta.'—*Life of the Prince Consort*, vol. i.

more than half empty; he carries all his real requisites in a portable hand-bag, and the old valise is clearly more for show than for use. You know the importance and dignity of ancient Churches, as of old families, are estimated by the extent and weight of their luggage.

TREVOR. No doubt, by hotel keepers and hall porters—not by thinkers and philosophers who know that brass-bound boxes and trunks may, and occasionally do, contain much useless lumber. Indeed, there are many dogmas which seem to me to resemble closely a valuable-looking and heavy portmanteau, which is after all filled with hay and stones, such as is sometimes left behind by hotel sharpers as compensation for an unpaid bill. Take, *e.g.*, the two last promulgated by the Romish Church—the Immaculate Conception and Papal Infallibility.

ARUNDEL. Well, as we are plain folk, who do not think their importance enhanced by the encumbrance of a score of packages when our actual needs can be compressed into a portable bag; and as we are able to dispense with the interested admiration of hotel-keepers and porters, our strictures are not applicable to us. . . . But before we leave Ramus, there is one question I should like to ask: What became of his wretched foe, Carpenterius?

TREVOR. He survived him only two years, and then died of a burning kind of fever which caused him intense agony. The friends of Ramus were eager to pronounce his miserable fate the Divine vengeance on a murderer.

MRS. HARRINGTON. After all, as you well remarked, Doctor, Carpenterius was only the product of a system—and one of the most frightful things connected with the St. Bartholomew, the crusade against the Albigenses, and other similar blood-stained pages of history, is that they could by any possibility have been deemed justifiable on grounds of Christian truth. The moral degradation of such a conviction—not to mention its direct opposition to the Spirit of Christ—appears to me almost worse than the inhuman savagery which was, to a great extent, its not unnatural expression.

HARRINGTON. And what a stupendous satire on religion (I do not limit the remark to Christianity, though of course on

the principle of *Corruptio optimi pessima*, she is most blameworthy in the matter), is the fact that more human lives have been sacrificed, directly or indirectly, on religious pretexts, than have been lost by all the purely political wars in which men have ever engaged. If Lucretius could sneer at the single sacrifice of Iphigeneia,

‘Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum,’

what would he not have said of the countless holocausts which have since been offered at the shrine, I will not say of religion, but of the Moloch which has usurped her holy name and dignity.

TREVOR. True: the St. Bartholomew is a lasting and irrefutable testimony to the evil effects of excessive dogma, and the intolerance which is its legitimate offspring. At the same time political causes played no small part in the event. These, however, we cannot now consider. Our discussion has already extended our usual limits; so I propose we now close it.

CHARRON.

‘ . . . ed io rimango in forse
Che ’l nò, e ’l sì, nel casso mi teuzona.’

Dante, *Inf.*, Canto viii.

‘ Nous sommes vrais à quæster la verité ; la posseder appartient à une plus haute et grande puissance.’

Charron, *De la Sagesse*, bk. i. ch. xv.

‘ They think this suspension a shame and a weakness, because they know not what it is, and they perceive not that the greatest men that are have made profession thereof ; they blush and have not the heart freely to say, I know not ; so much are they possessed with the opinion and presumption of science : and they know not that there is a kind of ignorance and doubt more learned and more certain, more noble and generous, than all their science and certainty.’

Translation of Charron’s *Sagesse*, by Samson Lemnard, p. 225.

‘ For matters of theory and difficult enquiry appertain not to the vulgar and lower rank of understandings. But for those who are capable of search after truth, and are provided with advantages for it, freedom of judgment is necessary in order to their success. With this the real philosophy begins, and in all its progresses still more and more disposeth the mind to it, and so delivers it from the vassallage of customary sayings and opinions.’

Joseph Glanvill, *Phil. Pia.*, p. 72.

CHAPTER III.

CHARRON.

TREVOR. Having discussed, at our last meeting, the French Gospel of Montaigne's *Essais*, we pass naturally on this occasion to the Acts of its Apostles. Charron¹ is the St. Paul of Montaignism.

ARUNDEL. And his position in that respect is unique among modern Skeptics. Leaving out Hume's influence on Kant, Charron is almost the sole instance in modern times of an eminent skeptical convert. Indeed, nothing in my opinion serves to show better the essentially artificial nature of extreme

¹ The authorities cited or consulted on the subject of this chapter are:—

De La Sagesse, Livres Trois, par M. Pierre Le Charron. A Bordeaux, par Simon Millanges, 1601.

This is the first edition of his greatest work, and is excessively rare. It is much sought after, because it contains passages that were altered in subsequent editions.

A good working edition of this work is Amaury Duval's in the *Collection de Moralistes Français*, of which it forms the 7th, 8th, and 9th volumes. It is the one generally referred to here.

Les Trois Veritez, a Bordeaux, par S. Millanges, 1595.

This is the first edition with Charron's name, an earlier one having being published anonymously.

Le Petit Traicté de Sagesse, which is partly a summary, partly a defence of the larger *De la Sagesse*, may be found in the supplement to Duval's edition, vol. iii. pp. 257-318.

* * M. Nisard is mistaken in asserting (*Hist. de la Litt. Française*, i. p. 487) that *Le Petit Traicté*, etc., was the original title of the Bordeaux edition of *La Sagesse*, and was published in 1601. It was prepared by Charron to be added to the 2nd edition of his larger work, which the author did not live to complete. See the *Avertissement* in Duval's edition, vol. iii. p. 258.

Ste Beuve, *Causeries du Lundi*, vol. xi. p. 254, etc.

Buhle, *Hist. de la Philosophie*, traduite par Jourdain, ii. pp. 781-788.

Nisard, *Hist. de la Litt.*, vol. i.

Bayle St. John, *Montaigne the Essayist*, vol. ii. p. 300, etc.

Bayle, *Dict.*, Art. 'Charron.'

skepticism, and the painfulness of the repression which it exercises on the intellect, than the infrequency and isolation of skeptics. In point of fact they are *lusûs naturæ*, abnormally engendered themselves, and leaving no issue behind them.

HARRINGTON. You forget the schools of ancient Greece and India. No doubt skepticism is oftentimes an isolated phenomenon, for more reasons than one; but it would be an enormous mistake to estimate its real influence by the number and eminence of avowed partizans.

MRS. HARRINGTON. Skeptics seem to me dotted irregularly over the history of human thought like volcanos over the globe.

MISS LEYCESTER. Possibly for the reason that they are Nature's means of remedying analogous evils; for both would seem to be safety-valves for forces imprisoned in one case within the earth, in the other within the capacities and irrepressible yearnings of the human intellect. Hence, though they are undoubtedly useful, Nature, with her usual economy, has not created more of either kind of destructive agency than was really necessary.

TREVOR. Skepticism seems in the ascendant to night. Not only is it a natural phenomenon, but it is also useful? What further apology is required? As to Charron, he may no doubt be called a disciple of Montaigne; at the same time his works convince me that his breadth of culture, love of freedom and of Nature were tendencies which would of themselves have ripened into a considerable latitude of thought, if not into actual skepticism, without any extraneous aid or suggestion. In most cases a skeptic, like a poet '*nascitur non fit.*'

MRS. HARRINGTON. I have found time to glance over Charron's life, prefixed to Dean Stanhope's translation, but am disappointed to find so little about his first connexion with Montaigne.

TREVOR. Stanhope's book, I must tell you, is an uncritical and untrustworthy exponent of Charron. Not only does the good dean insert occasional advertisements, as he calls them, as finger-posts of heresy, but he actually interpolates his orthodox modifications into his author's text. The book in fact is a literary centaur—the head and neck of an English

Divine grafted on the body of a French skeptic. A far better translation, though that also is imperfect, is the older one by Samson Lennard. As to the object of your search, the precise date and circumstances of Charron's first introduction to Montaigne is a point which none of the biographers of either have satisfactorily cleared up. Bayle St. John enables us to arrive at an approximation as to the date, for he tells us that the National Library of Paris possesses a copy of a work entitled, *Il Catechismo, overa Institutione Christiana, di M. Bernardino Ochino, da Siena, in forma di Dialogo in Basilea*, 1561.¹ On the title-page is Montaigne's signature, with the words, 'A prohibited book,' and a little below the following words written by Charron, 'The gift to me of the said lord of Montaigne in his castle, July 2, 1586.'² So that some kind of literary intimacy seems to have existed a few years prior to Charron's removal to Bordeaux in 1589; when his intercourse with Montaigne became close and continuous.

MISS LEYCESTER. Please tell us who was the author of this 'prohibited book' which Montaigne and Charron were probably discussing in July, 1586.

ARUNDEL. Ochino was an Italian Protestant, or perhaps I should say free-thinker, who seems to have exercised considerable influence in that age. All his works are on the Index; but he was an enemy to Protestant as well as to

¹ For a list of works in which this is included, annotated by Montaigne, cf. Dr. Payen's *Nouveaux Documents sur Montaigne*, p. 51. It would seem that the researches of Dr. Payen and M. G. Brunet have resulted in the discovery of thirty-two volumes bearing Montaigne's name or some inscription from his hand. See the above work, p. 55.

² Ste Beuve affects to question the authenticity of this inscription, but on what would appear to be inadequate grounds, he says, 'En ce cas Charron n'aurait guère profité du commerce de son sage ami, puisqu'il était resté jusqu'en 1598 un predicateur plein de passion' (*Causeries du Lundi*, xi. p. 239). But surely three years does not seem too long to allow for the transformation of an orthodox Romish priest into a skeptical philosopher. Moreover Charron's sermons are not the mere appeals to the feelings which the description 'plein de passion' would seem to convey. Like all his writings, they are marked by ratiocinative power, and that of a high order. Ste Beuve would appear to have derived his description of Charron's pulpit fervour from a contemporary record, which, as it describes the author of the *De la Sagesse* as an *énergumène*, is self-convicted of gross exaggeration, if not falsehood. See Ste Beuve's note, p. 239. An interesting specimen of Charron's sermons may be found in the appendix to M. Duval's edition of the *De la Sagesse*.

Romish intolerance; for he bitterly denounced Calvin's judicial murder of Servetus.¹

HARRINGTON. A most appropriate instructor for such a brace of skeptics. By the way, what an enormous service the Index must have conferred on the freer thinkers of the Renaissance as well as subsequently. It was a kind of 'Select Library Catalogue'—a voucher, on the part of infallibility, of the genuine freedom and breadth of culture of all works included in its list.

TREVOR. No doubt; the Index has often acted the double part of a scarecrow. Intended as a deterrent, it served to show the bolder and more long-sighted birds where congenial food might be found. In days when Bibliographies did not exist, and when opinions were not formed by Reviews, such a catalogue *raisonné* (and such it was in more senses than one) must have been of real use. Even now a French or Italian bookseller will tell you that the way to make a book sell is to get it placed on the Index. It acts like an abusive article in an influential modern review. It is an advertisement, a castigation, and an incentive to study, all in one.² Of course Charron's *Wisdom* shared the ordinary fate of all true *wisdom* in those days. It was placed on the Index in 1705.

MRS. HARRINGTON. I am surprised to find that Charron was not only a priest and a canon, but a successful popular preacher as well. Of all professions, that surely is the least befitting a genuine skeptic. What can be more preposterous than the attempt to convince others with no settled convictions of one's own?

HARRINGTON. He might have professed 'Twofold Truth,' and thus kept his Christianity apart from his skepticism; but for that matter, skepticism itself may easily become, as we have had reason to learn, the object of a very vigorous and

¹ For an account of Ochino, see the monograph of Dr. Benrath, *Bernardino Ochino von Siena, Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Reformation*, which has recently been translated into English. The Basle Catechism, a copy of which Montaigne presented to Charron, is described in pp. 293-298 of the German edition.

² On the influence of proscription in stimulating the sale of books, see some admirable remarks in Diderot, *Lettre sur le Commerce de La Librairie*. (Œuv. Comp. (Ed. Assézat et Tourneux), vol. xviii. p. 66, etc.)

not ineffective propaganda of its own. Sextos Empeirikos, and Montaigne, for instance, supply us with examples of skeptical sermons. In these writers we have convincing arguments to prove human Nescience, vigorous persuasives to apathy and ignorance, and no less vigorous dissuasives from dogmatism—the “original sin” of skepticism; not to mention the thrilling descriptions of *ἀταραξία*—the beatific condition which constitutes its Nirvana or final consummation; all the main elements, in short of ordinary pulpit eloquence, flavoured too with the earnestness and unction which characterize its best representatives. But, as a matter of fact, Charron’s popularity as a preacher belongs to an earlier portion of his life, before he had become known as the disciple and teacher of Montaigne’s philosophy.

ARUNDEL. His Sermons were published in 1600; with the object, as it is said, of calling public attention away from certain portions of his Book on Wisdom, which were held to savour of heresy. But it is needless to refer to these little-known discourses as proofs of his rare pulpit ability. The fact is sufficiently established by his better-known works, as my paper will, I think, serve to show. Moreover, his critics hold that his style was unduly influenced by his pulpit exertations. With many similarities in thought, method, and occasional mannerisms, etc., there is a considerable contrast between his own style and that of his masters. Charron as a rule is grave, sententious and didactic. Montaigne in his most characteristic moods is free and unrestrained. The former is at his best when directly argumentative and hortatory, the latter when allusive, humorous, and playfully ironical . . . but we need not prolong distinctions inherent in the men, as well as inevitable to two authors—one of whom wrote methodical systematic treatises, while the best literary form of the other consisted of pleasant, discursive but somewhat laxly constructed essays.

HARRINGTON. I think we must not exaggerate Montaigne’s influence over Charron. Even supposing their acquaintance began about the time when Montaigne gave his neighbour Ochino’s work, that would make Charron forty-five years of age. By that time the style of every man, both in speaking

and writing, is fully formed, and is not afterwards altered, except in very rare cases and by means of very prepotent influences.

TREVOR. On that point I am unable to agree with you. The style is the mere reflex of the mind, and partakes of all its mutations. It is therefore capable of modification and growth just as long as the mind is. A growing intellect can no more have a finished style at forty-five years of age, than it can boast a maximum of acquirements; and a cramped, ossified, unchanging style always seems to me a symptom of arrested mental development.

MRS. HARRINGTON. Your notion of style, Dr. Trevor, seems to me both novel and unsatisfactory. I cannot for my part see how a man's style can be materially affected by intellectual changes of any kind. You say it is the reflex of a man's mind; I would rather term it, its outward sensible expression. It seems to me to share the individuality of his character. It is like his gait, stature, or deportment. He may change his mode of thought, but his expression of it will remain unaltered; just as a man may walk or run, but his mode of locomotion will always be the same.

TREVOR. You would thus reduce style into a kind of fixed mechanical habit, that once formed cannot be altered. All I can say is, that that is a dogmatic conception of it which I am not able to share. Verbal expression seems to me a function of the intellect, dependent largely upon the volition, taste, and standard of excellence of the possessors. It may therefore be fashioned, modified, or transformed at will. Most great writers in every language have made their style; and that at no small cost of labour and patience; though no doubt there are some, as *e.g.* Montaigne and Hume, who have allowed theirs to be unconsciously coloured by their intellectual growth; and I am far from denying their success.

HARRINGTON. You cannot in my opinion lay down any rule on the subject. No doubt some writers *make* their style—with the result that the making process is painfully obvious. I humbly submit, at the hazard of making a trite remark, that the more natural, easy, simple style is best, and whatever artifice or fashioning is expended on it ought to be in that

direction. Montaigne's remarks on this point are full of good sense, and are especially worthy of remembrance in an age of 'fine writing' like the present.

ARUNDEL. So far as Charron is concerned, I think he is an example of a literary style not being influenced by what was a considerable mental movement. I at least can discern no great difference in that respect between his earliest and latest works. On the other hand, the distinction in thought and conception between *The Three Truths*, first published in 1593, and the *De la Sagesse*, published in 1601, is very clearly marked. It is especially seen in the more Pagan and Naturalistic tone of the later work. In the intervening eight years Charron had lost a good deal of that ecclesiastical appreciation of the distinctive features of Christianity, which is so marked a characteristic of his earlier work; and he had gained *quantum valeat*, a much higher estimate of the value of philosophic doubt. An interesting example of this is the different treatment to which he subjects Pyrrhonists and Academicians in the two books. In *The Three Truths* their Agnosticism is regarded as synonymous with Atheism. In the latter it is commended as a wise and philosophical preparation for dogma. . . . Other differences I have to speak of in my paper.

TREVOR. What a capital subject for an 'Imaginary Conversation'—much better than that chosen by Savage Landor of 'Montaigne and Scaliger'—would have been Montaigne and Charron, in one of their frequent conferences during the year 1589. One can imagine the two illustrious thinkers exchanging their varied reminiscences and ideas—Montaigne recounting in that easy humorous style we have in the *Essais*, with perhaps a somewhat greater admixture of Gascon provincialisms, the narrative of his life, his experiences at court, his adventures in the field, the history of his magisterial life among the burgesses of Bordeaux and the *conseillers* of its Parliament—narrating his experiences of men in every walk of life, and adding his humorous criticism of their countless foibles and eccentricities—detailing, with his wonted garrulity, his reminiscences of the remarkable persons he had known, of the successive kings of France whose court he had attended, of the statesmen and soldiers with whom he had come in contact,

of his own eccentric father, his tutors, and his intimate friend La Boëtie—then passing from men to books—from the dwarfs of the present to the giants of antiquity—showing to Charron his treasured copies of the classics, especially of his favourite authors among them, probably producing from under lock and key a few rare MSS. and editions which he had found in the course of his travels—reading choice bits from La Boëtie's MSS., while expatiating on the transcendant merits of his early lost friend—citing favourite passages from his own *Essais* or from his translation of Raymund of Sabieude, producing with more than common eagerness the best-thumbed work in all his library—Amyot's Translation of Plutarch, with his own marginal notes and numerous underscored passages, showing his large collection of common-places from the classics, criticising the writers of his own country—Clement Marot, Villon, Ronsard, Du Bellay and the rest—perhaps enjoying a laugh over Rabelais and his grotesque stories, but not forgetting his favourite Italian classics—Boccaccio, Ariosto and Tasso. Charron, too, we may suppose, though much less garrulous than his master, relating the experiences of his clerical career—his life at the court of Queen Marguerite, his adventures as a travelling preacher, his association with the leaders of the League in the early stages of that movement—enumerating and quoting favourite authors. We can imagine how both thinkers would compare the results, so closely similar, of their own independent ratiocination in philosophy, religion and politics. How, like two mariners who had traversed the same seas, encountered the same storms, and had brought their ships to anchor in the same harbour, they were eager to compare the results of their skeptical voyage. They would tell how their ships at starting were overloaded, the dangers they thereby incurred in heavy gales, and the relief experienced when they threw some portion of their cargoes overboard. Then, as a natural sequence, we might imagine both joining in deploring the unhappy condition of their country, the horror and mischief of religious wars, agreeing in the common cause of religious bigotry wherever found, *i.e.* overweening and too-confident dogma—deprecating such events as the massacre of St. Bartholomew, and the hardly less cruel acts and intentions of

Huguenots themselves; denouncing Calvin's narrow system and its natural outcome in the murder of Servetus—possibly looking forward, as did Ramus, to a future of peace, culture and tolerance—founding their hopes upon the inevitable diversity of all reasoning beings—which with the advance of self-knowledge and toleration would necessarily be admitted—or upon the Pyrrhonic maxim that all things are uncertain—or else upon the dualistic hypothesis that Religion and Philosophy constitute two entirely different provinces of thought, feeling and conviction. Thus we might imagine them holding converse while walking in the long summer evenings among the gardens and vineyards of the Chateau of Montaigne, or else seated in the winter twilight before the cheerful fire in his study, while the flames cast their flickering glow on the ranges of books on their shelves, perhaps too bringing out into fitful relief the skeptical maxims and apóphthegms carved on the timbers of the ceiling.

MRS. HARRINGTON. Thanks, Dr. Trevor, for your 'concentrated essence' of a supposed 'Montaigne and Charron' dialogue; but you seem to have drawn somewhat largely on your imagination for some of their subjects of discourse. . . . I fail to see what hopes for the future of France and humanity the two skeptics could have derived from the principles they severally advocated. Montaigne, *e.g.* could not have supposed that a Propaganda based upon his *Essais* and exemplified by his life would be likely to be successful, or if successful would be beneficial to humanity.

TREVOR. I agree with you so far, that Montaigne was not likely to worry himself about the future of humanity any more than he did about its present. His *bell' eta d' oro* had long passed away; but I have little doubt that, in his nonchalant manner, he thought its revival a probable contingency of the future. He deemed it not unlikely that men might, by contact with their works, be stirred by the same thoughts and principles that animated Sokrates or Cicero, Cato or Seneca. All the leading spirits of the Renaissance cherished similar day-dreams. They anticipated the continuous growth of that 'new birth' at whose cradle they were watchers, until it should become the dominating principle of humanity, quickening and

controlling its education, its institutions, its thoughts, and its social habits. The delirium of classicalism which we saw animated Petrarca and Boccaccio, was shared also by Montaigne and other French thinkers, though perhaps more soberly expressed. Thus to take one instance, I have little doubt, that Montaigne would have decidedly preferred the republican government of old Rome to the imbecile despotism of the House of Valois. He was also persuaded that with the advance of general culture, there would be a corresponding decline of dogmatic assertion and religious bigotry; and he undoubtedly advocated both in private and in his published *Essais*, his favourite principles of Pyrrhonic suspense and the unlimited diversity of all human minds—so that I am fully justified in supposing that himself and Charron sometimes took occasion to forecast the future.

ARUNDEL. As to Charron's out-look on the future, he had, I think, far higher claims than Montaigne to have furnished a safe prescription for its guidance. His stress upon morality (Prud'homie) as indispensable to religion, and his denunciations of the spurious religion that claimed to be divorced from human duty, has all the character of a Propaganda; and that of a most earnest and beneficial kind. This is quite the best feature of Charron's life, as my paper, which I will now begin to read, will sufficiently demonstrate.

* * * * *

Peter Charron was born at Paris, in 1541. His father was a librarian; and Peter was one of twenty-five children. With such a numerous offspring his father's circumstances were straitened; but the taste for books, which had probably suggested his profession, made him fully alive to the advantages of a good education. Peter was accordingly sent at an early age to the University of Paris, in which his more celebrated namesake, Peter Ramus, was at this time a Regius Professor. Young Charron appears to have soon manifested that taste for letters and philosophy that distinguished him throughout his life. What the curriculum at the University was for young scholars at that time our discussion on Ramus has already shown us. Having acquired Latin and Greek, the young student showed his own aptitudes by selecting Arts and Philosophy as the course of his maturer studies. He was thus introduced to Aristotle and Scholasticism; and when we come to examine his writings we shall find

well-marked traces of the logical formalism which that discipline would naturally produce. Having completed the usual course at Paris, he proceeded to the Universities of Orleans and Bourges in order to study jurisprudence. He took his degree of Doctor of Laws; and, returning to Paris, he exercised for some five or six years the profession of advocate. But he soon grew dissatisfied with his calling, for which he was in truth singularly ill-qualified. He possessed neither the flattering arts nor the influential patronage necessary to secure distinction therein; and we may well fear, that, as in the case of Petrarca, the charms of literature frequently seduced him from the dry technicalities of his profession. He resolved at last to abandon Law and betake himself to the Church. Accordingly he took up again the scholastic studies of his university career, read and carefully pondered the Fathers of the Church, and entered holy orders. In his new calling he at once achieved signal success. By means of his independent spirit, his great learning, his singular power of illustration, and generally, to use the words of his friend La Roche-Maillet, '*parce qu'il avoit la langue bien pendue*,' he became known as a popular preacher. Bishops were eager to employ him to preach special courses of sermons; and he seems to have discharged the functions of what we now call a 'Missioner.' In this capacity he came to be noticed by the famous Queen Marguerite, sister of Francis I. who made him her 'Preacher in ordinary.' Henry of Navarre is also said to have often 'assisted' at his sermons. With patrons so distinguished the ecclesiastical career of Charron was assured. He was appointed 'theologal' in some half-dozen dioceses, and received a canonry in the church of Bordeaux. But, notwithstanding his success, Charron was not satisfied. He attempted on two different occasions to return to a cloister and devote the rest of his days to quiet and study. Whether this intention discloses a Pietistic or merely restless spirit, I cannot profess to decide. On the whole I am inclined to regard the former as the more likely. His sermons, which are his earliest productions, seem to reveal occasionally the passion and instincts of a religious devotee and a mystic; at the same time they sometimes also betray a taste for the free-thought which finally became identified with his name. His intimate relation with the court of Marguerite, which was itself a centre of liberal culture and aspiration, seems to show that Charron was already on the path of free speculation when Montaigne first became acquainted with him. As we have already heard, the date of this celebrated rencontre is uncertain. Charron, as we have seen, was officially connected with the town of Bordeaux; he had also, as a travelling preacher, itinerated more than once through the provinces

of Guienne and Languedoc. Either of these circumstances might have brought him into contact with the great Essayist. What seems certain is that he had some acquaintance with Montaigne in 1586; and that from the year 1589, when Charron came to reside at Bordeaux, their intercourse was continuous until the death of Montaigne, who expired in his friend's arms in 1592. Charron seems to have, in a great measure, filled up for his old friend the vacuum caused by the death of La Boëtie. Montaigne made him his heir, allowed him to adopt his family coat of arms—a concession which has been truly called 'puerile et surtout peu philosophique'—and bequeathed him his library. These benefits Charron in his turn requited by making the husband of Montaigne's only daughter his residuary legatee.

What became of Charron after the death of his friend we have no means of knowing. His time seems to have been spent very largely in literary work—putting into a systematic form the philosophy of the *Essais* and the general teaching he had derived from his personal intercourse with Montaigne. In 1593 he published (anonymously) the first edition of his *Three Truths*; and two years afterwards an improved edition of the same work with his name. He must also about this time have planned and begun to write his celebrated *De la Sagesse*, the first edition of which appeared in 1601. The last years of Charron's life were greatly disturbed by persecution. The free culture and autonomous morality on which he had based his wisdom were altogether out of harmony with an age when obscurantism and immorality reigned supreme, and the 'wisdom' of the philosophic Christian was branded as egregious folly. In the midst of the theological commotion Charron died suddenly, in the street, by an apoplectic seizure; and his benighted foes were eager to discern in the event a signal manifestation of Divine anger at the manifold impieties contained in his latest work. At the time of his death he was engaged in publishing an amended edition of the *Sagesse*, which, however, he did not live to complete. I have been lucky enough to procure copies both of the edition of 1601 and that of 1604 (published the year after Charron's death). A careful collation of them convinces me that the second, though it reshapes the matter, and restates in a somewhat different form the ratioecination of the first, does not essentially modify it. The skepticism and free-thought of the latter is as conspicuous as of the former. The statement therefore sometimes made, that Charron yielded to the clamour of the ecclesiastical fanatics around him, and suppressed all the supposed obnoxious passages in his first utterance of 'Wisdom,' is utterly destitute of foundation.

Turning now to Charron's works, at least the two that represent his

philosophy, *Les Trois Verités* and the *De la Sagesse*, we may say, of his general mode of thought, that it is largely derived from Montaigne. He is thus indebted to his master for much more than friendship, a legacy of books, and a borrowed coat of arms. He owes to him the final stage in the evolution of his philosophy, and thereby his fame as one of the leading French thinkers of the sixteenth century. Like Mademoiselle de Gournay, Charron may have been a convert to the *Essais* (the first edition of which appeared in 1580), and therefore several years before the commencement of his literary activity by the publication of *The Three Truths*. At least it contains not a few thoughts and arguments which are also to be found in the *Essais*.

As its title suggests, this work is divided into three parts, which may be roughly characterized as: (I.) A philosophy of religion; (II.) A short treatise on Christian evidence; and (III.) A defence of the Romish Church. It seems to have been written, in the first instance, as a reply to Du Plessis Mornay's book on the Church; and its free and rationalistic spirit renders it to this day a favourable specimen of the Roman Catholic side of the controversy. The work secured, on its first publication, a large amount of attention, and was regarded by the prominent ecclesiastics of the day as a model of orthodox teaching. But beneath the demure garb of the priest and the Christian apologist may be seen the cloven foot of the Pyrrhonian philosopher. The growing teeth of the skeptic are discernible beneath the well-worn stumps of the believer.¹ In this respect Charron has a parallel in Huet of Avranches, whose *Demonstratio Evangelica* is a similar attempt to erect an elaborate dogmatism on the shifting sands of Pyrrhonism.² Charron's proclivities in this direction are most prominent in the first part of *The Three Truths*, in which he asserts, against Atheists and Free-thinkers, the existence of Deity. Here we have the frequent plea of skeptics, especially of his master Montaigne, as to the equality of beasts with men.³ He admits that we can have no demonstration of the being of a God; he adduces, as a proof of human weakness, the usual skeptical argument, that man cannot *know* even

¹ Même lorsqu'il traite des dogmes et qu'il se livre à un enseignement théologique, ainsi qu'il l'a fait dans son traité des *Trois Verités* (1594) et dans ses *Discours chrétiens* (1600), Charron est sceptique de méthode; c'est-à-dire qu'il insiste, avec un certain plaisir et une assez grande force de logique, sur les preuves de la faiblesse et de l'incapacité humaine: douter, balancer, surseoir, tant qu'on n'a pas reçu de lumières suffisantes, est l'état favori qu'il propose à quiconque veut devenir sage.—Sainte Beuve, *Causeries du Lundi*, vol. xi. p. 243.

² On the numerous points of affinity which exist between these renowned, but skeptical ecclesiastics, see Bartholmæss's interesting work, *Huet, ou le Scepticism Théologique*, p. 171.

³ *Les Trois Verités* (1595), p. 5.

what he see and touches; and this reasoning he frequently repeats and emphasizes in different parts of the treatise.¹ He maintains the paradox that the truest knowledge of God consists in perfect ignorance of him. He vituperates human reason in the same spirit and in the same language as Montaigne. Nor does he fail to employ the usual but dangerous expedient of making the recognized deficiencies of reason a plea for the necessity of faith; indeed, his assertion of that principle appears to me nearly as strong in *The Three Truths* as in his *Sagesse*. But we must especially note that the root-thought of the first and chief part of *The Three Truths* is the standpoint of Montaigne with regard to religion. Generally this may be described as the assertion of some general principle—Nature, reason, what not—as prior and superior to theology. You will find that this was the leading principle of Raymund of Sabiende. It was indirectly advocated by Montaigne, but Charron affirms it without equivocation or qualification. Here are a few sentences from the second chapter of his first Verity: ‘Religion is the knowledge and service of God: the former which has regard to the understanding may properly be termed wisdom; the latter, which exists in the will, is religion. Hence wisdom precedes and is the road to religion, just as knowledge goes before loving and serving; and as the intellect like a guide marches in front, and enlightens and points the way to the will. This is the holy conjunction, the sacred and perfect alliance of wisdom and religion, which must never be separated. Among the ancients the same men were professors both of one and the other, philosophers and priests. Things cannot go on well when there is a divorce between them—when one plagues and despises the other. It is a monstrosity to see priests that are ignorant and sc̄avans that are irreverent, so that wisdom is handled by the profane, and things sacred by brutes.’² When we come to the *Sagesse* we shall find the same principle of a superior moiety of religion still more distinctly asserted; but with the difference that it is less intellectual and more pointedly ethical. What is in the above passage called ‘Sapience’ occupies a large place in the latter work as ‘Prud’homic.’ I am far from saying that *The Three Truths* are as pronouncedly skeptical as the *Sagesse*. Taken as a whole, the former work represents Charron’s intellect at a stage when it had only partly accepted the skepticism of the *Essais*. Very remarkable *i.e.* is the different estimate of Pyrrhonism in *The Three Verities* and the *Sagesse*. You will remember Montaigne’s preference for Pyrrhonic suspense over Academic probability. Now this is Charron’s opinion of the former principle, as given in *The Three Truths*. Speak-

¹ *Les Trois Verités*, Books i. and ii. pp. 20, 171; Book iii. p. 45.

² *Les Trois Verités*, p. 5.

ing of different kinds of Atheists, he says: 'The second kind are those, who as they do not resolve the existence of Deity in the negative, so neither do they in the affirmative, but, like the Academics and Pyrrhonists, who profess always to doubt of all things, hold to neither side, because say they, truth cannot be found, or else that man is incapable of it. Or, possibly, by a stupid nonchalance, neither thinking nor caring about a matter that does not concern them, letting the world go on its ordinary course without regard for any unseen thing, or any power or energy beyond that which they touch with their eyes and fingers. . . . These men, neither professing nor believing in God, are truly Atheists.'¹ And in another place, after quoting Sextos Empeirikos and his reasons against God's existence, Charron proceeds:—'Who does not see the folly and impertinence of these arguments, which mete God by the insignificant measure of man, and indeed are unworthy both of response and consideration. We must doubtless believe that those who use them do not speak as of certainties, and are convinced of their weakness, but they desire to debate, contradict, and dispute about all things, so as to maintain always their axiom, that there is nothing certain, and that all things have a double aspect?'² This is surely a fair criticism of Pyrrhonism, and in my opinion is conclusive; but the contrast between this judgment and the extravagant eulogy he lavishes on the same principle in his *Sagesse* is very remarkable. Here he styles it 'the chief freedom of thought,' 'that fair liberty of judgment,' 'that lordly freedom (*liberté seigneuriale*) of intellect,' 'the surest position and the happiest state of the human mind.' He says that Pyrrhonism cannot be heretical, 'they are things opposite.'³ He finds its analogies in the philo-

¹ Op. cit., p. 10.

² Op. cit., p. 61.

³ Vol. ii. p. 55. He repeats the same argument in *Le Petit Traicte*, vol. iii. p. 132. Charron must be supposed to be here speaking theoretically, and from the standpoint of the inherent attributes of doubt and heresy. The one being definitive non-choice, the other definitive choice. As a matter of fact, a man so learned as Charron must have known that doubt, in the simplest sense of the term, *i.e.*, not the affirmation of heterodox doctrines, but the non-affirmation of orthodox dogmas—the mere attitude of suspense or neutrality—is held to constitute a heinous offence by the Romish Church, and one frequently expiated by a martyr's death. Detailed proofs of such a well-known fact are needless, but a passing reference may be made to the Decretals of Gregory IX. t. ii. p. 237: where an infidel is defined as 'he who has not the certitude of faith'; and infidelity, *i.e.* mere non-belief, is defined by the Lateran Council of 1315 as an 'heretical contagion,' on which dicta a modern writer well comments: 'Le Pouvoir Spirituel (*i.e.* the Romish Church) va donc plus loin que l'extermination de la Liberté de Penser, il proscrit le doute non exprimé, l'absence de foi cachée au fond du cœur.' (V. Guichard, *La Liberté de Penser*, p.

sophical principles of all ancient sages, points out the best mode of acquiring it, *viz.* to possess an universal mind throwing its outlook and consideration over the whole universe, all the while cautiously admitting—I must give you his words—‘C’est à peu près et en quelque sens l’Ataraxie des Pyrrhoniens, qu’ils appellent le Souverain bien.’¹ . . . We must I think admit that Charron’s Free-thought made rapid strides between 1595 and 1601. Nor is this different estimate of Pyrrhonism the only distinction between the earlier and later of his philosophical works, though it is the one that most concerns us. Sometimes, in his *Three Truths*, Charron is just as superstitious as the most benighted of his co-religionaries of the sixteenth century; and in spite of his general candour, occasionally sinks into controversial harshness. Thus he recapitulates the old legends of his church as to the wonderful and tragic deaths of heretics; not foreseeing that a time would come when his own sudden death would be regarded by his enemies as a Divine judgment on the many heresies of his *Sagesse*. On the whole, however, *The Three Truths* contain the same qualities that we find to characterize the *Sagesse*; and which made the latter the most famous work (next to the *Essais*) in the French literature of the sixteenth century. The tendencies, at least, are the same. There is the same stress on mental freedom, on rationalism, on the religion of conscience and humanity as contrasted with ecclesiasticism. The same appeal to dictates of nature. We are for ever meeting tracks of the *Essais*, though their impressions in point of distinctness are not always alike. Charron, like Montaigne, is always ready to acknowledge the merits of an opponent, whether in disposition or in reasoning. Thus he admits without qualification that Atheism ‘can only dwell in a soul extremely hardy and brave,’—a common fallacy which Pascal, perhaps quoting Charron, qualified by the important limitation ‘only to a certain extent.’²

The style of *The Three Truths* is the same grave, closely reasoned argumentation that we find in his later work, occasionally lit up by

112.) On this subject the late Bishop Thirlwall has the following weighty remarks: ‘A single refusal to conform to the expression of orthodox doctrine has always been held sufficient to establish the charge of *heretica pravitas*. What Inquisitor was ever known to allow the plea of honesty, earnestness, love of truth, and the like, as a ground of acquittal or a mitigation of punishment? The prosecutors can only justify their maxims and conduct by claiming for themselves the prerogatives of the Searcher of hearts, and by practically blaspheming the Holy Ghost by imputing their own uncharitableness to His inspiration.’—Thirlwall, *Remains*, iii. p. 491. Comp. on same subject Hofmann, *Lex.*, Art. ‘Occulti Hæretici.’

¹ *De la Sagesse* (1st ed.), p. 312.

² Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. Faugère, vol. i. p. 221.

a humorous or satirical vivacity of manner, and sometimes kindling into fervent invective, but always displaying considerable felicity of argument and illustration. As might have been expected, he makes the most of the mutual divisions among the Reformers; and his reply to their claim of personal inspiration is fairly conclusive.

‘For who or what prevents my claiming inspiration for myself in opposition to them? The Spirit tells me that the Books of Maccabees are canonical; to Luther he says they are not. The Spirit tells Calvin that the Epistle of James is canonical; to Luther he says it is not, but an epistle of straw. Here is a fine rule to testify of things.’¹

The origin and abode of human truth, which Montaigne half hints is individual, supernatural and intuitional, Charron, in the last resort, dutifully places in the Church; but there is nothing in this well-worn argument which need occupy our attention. On leaving the subject of *The Three Truths*, it is but fair to notice that Charron does not concede that its reasonings and conclusions are superseded by those of his treatise on wisdom; inasmuch as there are frequent references in the latter to the former work as containing a fuller exposition of his views on the religious side of his subject.

But with all due admission of the excellencies of *The Three Truths*, especially considering the time when the book was written, the treatise by which Charron is best known, that which has given him his name as a philosopher, and branded him as a skeptic, is his great work *De la Sagesse*. It is difficult to convey in a few words an adequate idea of this remarkable production. It purports to be a system of philosophy, a guide to, some would rather say *from*, religion, and a complete code of ethics. It is a *vade mecum* on all conceivable topics of human speculation and practice—a kind of ‘whole duty of man’ regarded from the standpoint of the skeptical and Stoic philosopher. In this respect nothing can exceed the wide sweep of its range. No subject is too sublime, none too difficult, none too homely and trivial for its discussion. From the nature of Deity, and the deity of Nature, he passes to such topics as the conduct of a military campaign, or the proper food and treatment of new-born children. His canvas is as large, though not so crowded, as Montaigne’s. The difference is precisely that of their respective positions, education, and circumstances. Montaigne, the courtier and country gentleman, self-educated for the most part, and restrained by no formal methods, or limits of systematic teaching, expatiates freely over the whole domain of human knowledge and experience. Charron, on the other hand, initiated by his college career into the hair-splitting

¹ *Le Trois Vrités*, Book iii. p. 154.

dialectics of Scholasticism—receiving perhaps a still stronger impulse in the direction of formalism from his legal studies—gives his materials a more concise, coherent, and methodical form.¹ Indeed his merit in this particular is almost nullified by its excess, for he has as many divisions, sub-divisions, and cross-divisions as a Schoolman. The effect of this elaborate arrangement and concentration, compared with the discursiveness of his master, has been variously estimated by his critics. Some have been so far misled by it, as to suppose that Charron's intellectual capacity was much smaller than that of Montaigne;² an hypothesis which I think every conscientious student of the *De la Sagesse* would unhesitatingly reject; while others have ascribed to its more systematic form that preponderating influence, compared with the *Essais*, which they say it has exercised over the minds of French thinkers.³

Charron begins his work with a Preface in which he defines Wisdom, and proclaims his object of training men for worldly wisdom rather than Divine; not that the former is inferior to the latter, for philosophy is older than theology, as Nature is older than Grace.⁴ Nature or Reason being the first and universal law, and the inspired light of God.⁵ The requirements of the philosopher in his pursuit of wisdom are:—1. Self-knowledge. 2. Freedom of mind (an euphemism for Skepticism). 3. Conformity to Nature. 4. Content. Like Montaigne, Charron does not claim infallibility for his researches; he *presents* his thoughts, but does not *impose* them.⁶ He defends the boldness of his work by claiming for Wisdom its due prerogative—the right of judging all things, quoting St. Paul (1 Cor. ii. 15), ‘He that is spiritual judgeth all things; yet he himself is judged of no

¹ M. Etienne regards this difference of form as the natural growth and consolidation which must mark the progress of every philosophical system. Cf. *Essai sur La Mothe le Vayer*, p. 66.

² Bayle St. John says, ‘Charron *was* Montaigne's disciple, but could only receive a portion of his teaching. This depended on the construction of his mind, and on its narrower capacity,’ etc.—*Montaigne the Essayist*, ii. p. 303.

³ ‘Avec des qualités beaucoup moins brillantes que Montaigne . . . il exerça peut-être sur les esprits un ascendant plus considerable, grace à la methode avec laquelle il ent presenter des idées d'emprunt, grâce au cadre élégant dans laquelle il réunit et condensa tout le contenu des immortels *Essais*, etc.—*Dict. des Sciences Philosophiques*, Art. ‘Charron’—with which may be compared Ste Beuve's opinion, *Causeries du Lundi*, xi. p. 286—speaking of the comparative circulation of Montaigne's *Essais* and Charron's *Sagesse* in the eighteenth century, he says, ‘Montaigne a dispensé de Charron qui, à bien des egards n'a fait autre chose que donner une édition didactique des *Essais*, une table bien raisonnée des matières, et qui n'avait point ce qui fait vivre.’

⁴ Pref. *De la Sagesse*, M. Duval's ed., vol. i. p. xl.

⁵ Pref., p. xliii.

⁶ Pref., p. lvii.

man.' A text often cited, though not always consistently, by ecclesiastical skeptics.

The work itself begins with some reflections on the self-knowledge he has already proclaimed—the sage's first and indispensable requirement. The difficulty of this knowledge is shown by the complex quality of all human lives and actions. Charron is largely indebted here, as elsewhere, to Montaigne, not only for the substance of his argument and illustrations, but also for the very terms in which they are stated. This is, indeed, a prominent feature throughout the book. The reader soon discovers that Charron's wisdom is not always a pure native product, much of it being imported from foreign sources. The Greek skeptics and Montaigne supply him with skepticism. Seneca and Du-Vair furnish him with Stoicism; Justus Lipsius and Bodin with political philosophy. These and other authorities are employed without the least acknowledgment, and in such a free, natural and unaffected manner as to prove that plagiarism was not yet recognized as a literary crime. Having shown the need of self-knowledge, Charron proceeds to the consideration of Man as composed of Body and Soul. His description of the body displays no small knowledge of the anatomy and physiology current in his day. When he comes to treat of the soul, its different powers and faculties, and the many irreconcilable opinions which have been held concerning it, his skepticism breaks forth in a quite unmistakable form; and with an earnestness and directness of purpose, to which Montaigne, with his cynicism and levity, is a perfect stranger. The senses are with Charron, as with other skeptics, the sources of human knowledge, though of course such knowledge is imperfect. Men born without some of the senses would not of themselves discover the defect—the only sense absolutely necessary to life being that of feeling. Moreover senses other than our own are quite conceivable. 'Who knows,' asks Charron, 'whether the difficulties we find in most of the works of Nature, as well as our inability to comprehend certain of our mental operations, may not be ascribed to the want of some sense which we do not possess.'¹ Whether the senses are absolutely false or not he will not categorically decide; but he thinks it at least certain that they deceive the reason, and are deceived by it in turn. Behold, he exclaims, what a fine knowledge and certainty a man may possess, when both his external and internal faculties are full of falsity and weakness.² Charron places the seat of the soul in the brain, and lays himself open to the charge of materialism, by affirming the

¹ *De la Sagesse*, i. p. 86.

² *De la Sagesse*, i. p. 90. 'Voilà quelle belle science et certitude l'homme peust avoir, quand le dedans et le dehors est plein de fausseté et de foiblesse.'

connexion and co-duration of its faculties with the organism. He makes some approximation to modern psychological discovery when he affirms that the diverse qualities of the soul are the same in essence,¹ though differing in power—diversities in case of the mind being much greater than in that of the body. Similarly, he anticipates the fundamental axiom of Descartes by affirming that the soul's existence consists in, and is proved by, its continued activity. Hence it is unceasingly prying, searching and enquiring, as if urged by an inextinguishable thirst for knowledge, which is the reason that Homer calls men *ἄλφηστας*, or enterprising.² Doubt and ambiguity form, therefore, the proper nourishment of the soul. But all its enterprises it pursues rashly and lawlessly. It is a kind of restless implement, changeable, reversible, an instrument of lead or wax, it folds up, extends itself, agrees with everything, and is more flexible and elastic than air or water.³ Apparent reason it discovers everywhere and in everything, thereby testifying that what is impious, unjust, abominable in one place, is piety, justice, and honour in another.⁴ No desire is more natural than that of knowing the truth; we put forth all our strength to apprehend it, but our efforts are vain, for Truth is not a thing to be caught and handled, still less to be possessed by mankind. It has its abode in the bosom of God. Man knows nothing rightly, purely, truly as he ought. He is the hapless prey of appearances which are found everywhere, and pertain to falsehood as much as to truth. Perhaps the greatest argument for truth is the general consent of mankind; but the majority of men being fools,⁵ this cannot be said to be either conclusive or satisfactory. As a proof that human liability to error increases in a direct ratio with the advance of knowledge, he points out that great errors are the concomitants of great minds, and that gifted races are more difficult to rule than inferior; illustrating his argument by the fact that there are more seditions in ten years in Florence than in five hundred in a town of Switzerland or the Grisons. The diseases of the mind are far more

¹ *De la Sagesse*, i. p. 117.

² Vol. i. p. 102.

³ i. p. 122.

⁴ i. p. 123.

⁵ From this, and similar places, Charron has drawn on himself the reproach of infusing sectarianism into the skeptic philosophy, and thereby depriving it of one of its main excellencies—its spirit of rigid impartiality and tolerance. Certainly, to the ordinary Philistine, the man who neither enquires nor doubts, Charron is not very complimentary. In another place, *e.g.* (vol. i. p. 402), he says that 'vox populi,' so far from being identical with 'vox Dei,' ought rather to be rendered by 'vox stultorum.' Similarly, he maintains that the beginning of wisdom is to beware of popular opinions; and among his favourite apophthegms is the saying attributed to Pythagoras:—'τὰς δὲ λεωφόρους μὴ βαδίζειν.' 'Walk not on the public road.' Cf. *Porphyrîi Vita Pythagoræ*, § 42.

dangerous and incurable than those of the body. For this suggestive hypothesis he assigns three causes:—1. The mind is easily affected by the state of the body. 2. The contagion of popular opinion. 3. The corruption of the will and the force of the passions. The second of these causes is the most widely operative; men are governed by opinion rather than by truth; and as opinions are dictated by authority, it may be said that ‘*nous croyons, jugeons, agissons, vivons et mourons—a credit*’—a sufficiently compendious description of humanity *à la skeptique*!

After some further discussion of the same kind, Charron compares, in the manner of Montaigne, the status of men with that of brutes. He finds that for the most part they are on an equality, and the few supposed advantages possessed by man are in reality sources of weakness.¹ The attributes most characteristic of humanity are vanity, inconsistency, weakness and misery. Man is weak even in his pleasures. So mingled are all things in his lot, ‘that even the movements and folds of the visage which serve for laughter serve as well for weeping.’ But weak as a man is towards virtue, he is still more helpless with respect to truth.² He cannot bear its radiance, he blinks at it like an owl at the sun. ‘It is strange,’ says Charron, ‘man has a natural desire to know the truth, and to obtain her. In his search for her he upsets everything, still he cannot reach her. Were she to present herself he could not comprehend her. Because he cannot succeed he is offended; but it is not her fault, for she is most fair, amiable, and accessible; it is human weakness which cannot receive such splendour.’³ In his vain pursuit of truth, man employs two methods, reason and experience, both are weak, vacillating and uncertain;⁴ but what proves man’s inherent weakness more than anything else is religion. And here we touch upon the most striking feature of Charron’s teaching. That ordinary skeptics should be indifferent, or disdainful to religion, is only what we might expect; but here we have a Romish priest, a popular preacher, an ecclesiastical dignitary, one who attempted on two occasions to join a religious order, who finds in religion, its ideas, duties, sanctions, and beliefs, the

¹ i. p. 249. Comp. Goethe’s Mephistopheles—

‘Hättst du ihm nicht den Schein des Himmelslichts gegeben;
Er nemmts Vernunft und brauchts allein
Nur thierischer als jedes Thier zu sein.

Faust, Prolog. im Himmel.

This is, of course, a purely Mephistophelian view, and so far from exhausting, does not really approach the philosophy of the question.

² i. p. 256.

³ i. p. 257.

⁴ i. p. 258.

crowning proof of the weakness of human reason.¹ He tells us that all religions have in them something contrary to common-sense.² Their differences in respect of doctrine and worship proclaim their human origin; indeed, they are determined for the most part by geographical limits; for 'la nation, le pays, le lieu donne la Religion,'³ words which summarize Voltaire's well-known lines:—

'Je le vois trop; les soins qu'on prend de notre enfance
Forment nos sentiments, nos mœurs, notre croyance.
J'eusse été près du Gange esclave des faux dieux,
Chrétienne dans Paris, musulmane en ces lieux.'

What can be more absurd, asks Charron, than the ideas which religion inculcates, that God, *e.g.* delights in sacrifices and offerings,⁴ or can be represented by the instrumentality of human anthropomorphism?⁵ Even the sacraments, with their material means and external actions, are but witnesses of human poverty and degradation.⁶ They are useful, just as racks and gibbets are useful, to keep men in good behaviour,⁷—in a word, all religions, all acts of ritual and worship, and everything included by them, are only to be regarded as concessions to human frailty. Were men really wise, they would be better off without religion at all; but being what they are, it is an unfortunate and disagreeable necessity.⁸ The usual incentives to goodness and deterrents from evil which religion proclaims, *e.g.* happiness or misery in a future life, Charron thinks quite ineffectual.⁹ Moreover, all religions are, of their own nature, liable to intolerance; a dietum which he accompanies with well-deserved strictures on the policy of the Romish Church in this respect.¹⁰

¹ Vol. i. p. 258.

² Vol. ii. p. 127.

³ Vol. ii. p. 131.

⁴ Vol. ii. p. 122.

⁵ Vol. i. p. 261.

⁶ i. p. 263. His language on this subject is worth quoting:—'Les Sacremens en matière vile et commune de pain, vin, huile, eau, et en action externe de mesmes, ne sont' ce pas temoignages de nostre povreté et bassesse?' Students of religious thought and its varieties need not be reminded of the very different aspect which the material parts of the sacraments present to some devout thinkers. One of the dominating thoughts in the *Religious Development* of J. H. Newman, *e.g.*, was the entirely opposite conception—the doctrine that 'material phenomena are both the types and the instruments of real things unseen.' Cf. Newman, *Apologia*, etc. *passim*. Comp. Raymund of Sabieude's *Sacramental Scale. Evenings with the Skeptics*, vol. ii.

⁷ i. 261.

⁸ i. 261.

⁹ ii. 132.

¹⁰ Written a few years after the St. Bartholomew massacre, such passages as the following have a special significance (vol. ii. p. 154).

'Quelles execrables meschancetés n'a produit le zèle de Religion? Mais se trouve-t-il autre subject ou occasion au monde, qui en aye peu produire de

After what I have adduced, you can, I think, have no doubt as to Charron's extreme skepticism. In some respects it is even more thorough-going than Montaigne's, at least he extends it to subjects from which it is, in words, carefully excluded by his master. That the latter should, nevertheless, be deemed the greater skeptic, is probably owing to the cynical tone of his writings. Montaigne treats serious subjects with the levity and flippancy of an absolute unbeliever, while Charron discusses his skeptical questions with the gravity and earnestness of a believer. But, notwithstanding the pronounced character of Charron's skepticism, I do not myself think that we must class him among absolute skeptics, those who doubt for doubt's sake. His real intention, in my opinion, was to employ skepticism as a method and a means, just as it was employed by Descartes and so many others.

Charron was above all things an ethical reformer; he desired to propagate a morality which should combine the loftiest ethical teaching both of heathen and Christian times. The need of some effort in this direction, of presenting a different and higher standard of human duty than that entertained by all classes of French society at this period, was too obvious. Contemporary writers are unanimous as to the religious hypocrisy, the foul, reeking corruption, both morally and socially, of the time. The court, the nobility and the clergy vied with each other in their undisguised contempt of all genuine religion, and in the open profligacy of their lives. The most elementary principles of Christian ethics were so persistently subordinated to a superficial observance of religion, or to unhuman greed, passion and luxury, that it must have seemed to an austere moralist like Charron as if Christianity had failed in its mission. He therefore purposed, in the very spirit of Jesus Christ, to vindicate for morality its own undoubted prerogative. Instead of making it subordinate to religion, he proposed to award it the very highest place in human duty. He would fain infuse into the veins of an effete and moribund Christianity some of the fresh blood and tonic restoratives

pareilles? Il n'appertient qu'à ce grand et noble subject de causer les p'us grands et insignes effects—

Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum

Quæ peperit sæpe scelerosa atque impia facta.'

And a little further on, speaking of those who have religion without integrity, and who mistake religious zeal for virtue, he says:—'Croyent que toute chose quelle qu'elle soit, trahison, perfidie, sedition, rebellion et toute offense à quiconque soit, est non seulement loisible et permise, colorée du zèle et soin de religion, mais encores louable meritoire et canonisable, si elle sert au progrez et advancement de la religion, et reculement de ses adversaires.'—Vol. ii. pp. 155, 156.

of pre-Christian times. To this end he employed his skepticism, to clear the way, just as he repeatedly recommends missionaries to the Chinese to employ similarly destructive agencies for the same purpose. And having accomplished, as he thought, his object of undermining and gradually exterminating dogmatism and presumption, he attempted to erect a new ethical system of his own on the site of the ruins. This constructive method consists mainly in the inculcation of the virtue of Prud'homie.¹ The signification of this comprehensive term is not very easily expressed by a single word. It is one of the words most frequently employed by the Troubadours of the twelfth century, and is often used by Joinville in his *Memoirs*² as descriptive of his master, Saint Louis. It seems to include the varying meanings which the Greeks included in the word *φρόνησις*, and which we express by the terms probity or integrity, virtue and prudence; it denotes a combination of the highest goodness, with the greatest amount of veracity, both moral and intellectual. According to Charron, it marks that attribute of the soul or mind which answers to the perfect health of the body.³ 'True Prud'homie,' he says, in another place, 'which I require of every one who wishes to be wise, is free and candid, manly and generous, cheerful and pleasant, self-possessed, uniform and constant; it walks with a firm tread, is bold and confident, pursuing always its own path, without casting a glance behind or on either side, without halting, or changing its pace and

¹ The word is thus spelt in the dictionaries both of the Academy and of M. Littré, though the latter remonstrates against the caprice of the former in spelling Prud'homie with a single m, while Prud'homme is assigned two m's. See Littré, *ad voc.*

² Cf. Index to *Joinville's Memoirs*, Didot's edition, 1874, and Ste Beuve, *Causeries du Lundi*, xi. p. 257. Cf. Littré's *Dictionary*, *ad voc.*

³ ii. 225, 'La santé est au corps ce que la prud'homie est en l'esprit: c'est la prud'homie du corps, la santé de l'ame.' Michelet seems to think the virtue of Prud'homie of too negative a quality to accomplish anything great. His words are worth quoting: 'Nulle education n'est solide, nulle n'est orientée et ne sait son chemin, si d'abord elle ne pose simplement, nettement, son principe religieux et social. Rabelais ne l'a pas fait, pas plus que Montaigne, Fénelon ni Rousseau. Son idéal n'est autre que le leur, *l'honnête homme*, celui qu'accepte aussi Molière. Idéal faible et négatif, qui ne peut faire encore le héros et le citoyen.'—*Hist. France*, viii. 422. The same objection, couched in precisely similar language, has been made to the Christian character—the righteousness enjoined in the Sermon on the Mount—a quality closely allied to, if not identical with, 'the honest man' of the French moralists. Michelet only repeats the old reproach of the enemies of Christianity, that it is deficient in the elements of heroism and patriotism. This is no place to discuss the whole question. It may be enough to point to the history of Christianity for a triumphant refutation of such an objection, and to suggest that it is founded on a wrong conception of the nature of education, which is to lay a strong,

gait for the wind, the weather, or any other varying circumstance.’¹ The province of this Prud’homie is the law of nature, that is the equity and universal reason which enlightens and irradiates within each one of us. He who acts according to its impulse acts according to God. Such are the characteristics which Charron assigns to his Prud’homie—the attributes of his ideal sage. No doubt, there is a considerable infusion of Stoicism in this portraiture; but we must recollect that there is a phase of Christianity closely allied to the stern, self-asserting qualities, which it is the tendency of the Stoic philosophy to produce; and that it is precisely this aspect which is best adapted to counteract certain kinds of religious and moral degeneracy. But Charron is not satisfied with insisting on this heathen unsanctified virtue of integrity (so I translate Prud’homie), without identifying or connecting it with popular Christianity. In the first edition of his work he makes the original impulse to the virtue of integrity to be Nature, which however he identified with God. In the second edition, a paragraph is expressly added in order to make Divine Grace the effective working power of integrity, comparing the virtue itself to ‘organ pipes which are silent until filled with the wind of God’s grace.’ Although the distinction might be mainly nominal, it is clear that Charron preferred the unsophisticated terms Reason and Nature as the foundation and motive influence of religious and moral excellence, to the more usual terminology of Augustinian dogmatism. As he thus connects Prud’homie with religion, so he is especially careful to point out the limits of this connexion. Integrity is not to be separated from the unsuperstitious piety which is a primary law of Nature; but they are by no means to be confounded together: piety and probity, religion and integrity, are in fact two distinct things;² they should be joined together, but not intermingled, so as, apparently, the existence of one should be merged and swallowed up in that of the other. Charron, it is clear, had seen—it was the source of the moral corruption of the age³—that ethical laws and principles were submerged and lost in the firm, and broad foundation for after self-culture; not to build in every case a towering superstructure. For the best interests of humanity it had been well if the education of the past had been a little less positive and constructive, and more suspensive and undogmatic than history shows it to have been.

¹ Vol. ii. p. 78.

² It must be remembered that the Christianity from which Charron desires to keep his Prud’homie, was the vitiated Christianity of his time.

³ On this subject comp. H. Martin’s *Hist. de France*, vols. v., vi., vii. and viii., *passim*, or the histories of Michelet or Sismondi. Among other contemporary authors, Cornelius Agrippa inveighs in forcible terms against the corruption of the time, and especially of the French Court, of which he had some experience. He thus speaks of the state of a town in which the court had taken up its residence: ‘Jam vero recedens e civitate, aula, heu quam

external observance of religious rites. He desired to preserve his Stoical virtue from the contamination of the unworthy motives, the selfish impulses and considerations, which were allowed to prevail in the debased Christianity then current. Above all he required, like Pomponazzi, that the integrity he so earnestly advocated should be self-sufficing and disinterested. That virtue and religion should be regarded, not as a means to self-interest, but as their own privilege and their own reward; that the duties suggested by them should be performed entirely for their own sakes, for their own inherent nobility and excellence, and not for any extraneous motive, of whatever kind. The language in which he urges this seems to me so noble, so eloquent, so closely argued, as to be worth quoting, especially as it may serve also as a specimen of qualities which fully account for his eminence as a preacher.

‘Now, in order to complete my subject, consider this: what I wish and require in my ideal wise man is a true integrity and a true piety united and joined together in marriage, rather than that either should exist and maintain itself without the help of the other, and act by its own private impulse. I would have a man virtuous without heaven and hell. The words are to me horrible and abominable, “If I were not a Christian, if I were not afraid of God and of being damned, I would or would not do this!” O coward and miserable wretch! What thanks dost thou then expect for all that thou doest? Thou art not wicked, thou darest not, for thou fearest punishment. I would have thee not merely not to dare, but not even to wish; and that although thou wert certain of never being called to account. Thou actest the good man forsooth, in order to be paid, and be requited with great thanks. I would thou wert so, even though no one ever knew of it. I would that thou wert virtuous, because Nature and Reason (that is, God) desired it; because the order and general economy of the world, of which thou art a part, so required; because thou wert unable to be otherwise, because thou couldst not proceed against thyself, thy existence, thy welfare, thy destiny; and

fœdam caudam post se relinquit! Hi adulteras comperiunt uxores, illi stupratas, et vel abductas in scortam filias: alii supplantatos filios, alii corruptos servos et ancillas. Quid multa? fit luctus ingens, totaque civitatis facies immutata facta est, sicut facies meretricis. Scio ergo famosam Galliarum urbem ea causa sic perversam, ut vix aliqua ibi matrona pudica sit, vix filiae nubant virgines: quin et Palatinum scortum fuisse summi honoris est, et seniores matronæ juniorum lenæ sunt; eaque turpitudine sic invaluit, ut nullus verecundiæ locus sit, vix maritis ipsis uxorum meretricatus curæ est, modo (ut ait Abraham ad Saram), bene sit illis propter illas vivantque ob gratiam illarum.’—*De Incertitudine et Vanitate*, cap. lxviii.

afterwards let come of thy conduct what may. I wish moreover for the piety and religion, not which originates, causes or engenders that integrity already born in thee, and forming part of thee, planted as it is by Nature, but that which sanctions, authorizes and crowns it. Religion is subsequent to integrity; it is moreover something apprehended by hearing (for faith cometh by hearing and by the word of God), by revelation and instruction; and hence it cannot be a cause. It is rather integrity which ought to cause and produce religion; for it is the first, the more ancient and natural, that which teaches us that we should render to every man his due, preserving for each his own place. . . . Those therefore pervert all order who make integrity follow, and be subordinate to religion.'¹ 'He who is a good man,' says Charron elsewhere, 'by mere scrupulosity and religion, is not so at all: do you avoid and despise such a man. He who possesses religion without integrity, is more dangerous than the man who has neither the one nor the other.'

No doubt these were bold words. One can readily imagine the mingled indignation and alarm they must have caused to the debauched nobility and degenerate clergy of France. It was indeed a novel 'wisdom' which Charron desired to promulgate. It amounted to a clear and distinct subversion of the popular Catholicism of the day. That religion, provided it were professedly orthodox, might exist without integrity, was not merely a widely-diffused belief, it was the ordinary standard of human action, for clergy and laity alike. Moreover, the superiority of religion, even in its narrower acceptation, to all other laws and standards of human duty was the very basis on which the enormous fabric of Roman Catholicism had been reared. Yet here we have Charron boldly controverting each position. According to him, religion without integrity is worse than worthless, and the laws of Nature and Reason, by which integrity is innate in every man, are both anterior and superior to the religion which can

¹ These eloquent sentences form the concluding paragraph of chap. v. pp. 371, 372 (Book ii.), of the first edition of *De la Sagesse*. They are, however, found in a diluted and extended form in Charron's own second amended edition. The editors of M. Duval's edition do not seem to have noticed this, for to the paragraph which they have inserted in their margin, pp. 156, 157, they append the following note: 'Ce morceau, l'un des plus fortement pensés, et des mieux écrits de tout l'ouvrage, a été retranché dans les éditions de 1604 et années suivantes, faites à Paris et à Rouen, sous les yeux de la Sorbonne et du Parlement.' Had they glanced over pp. 150-154 of their own edition, they would have seen the reason why this paragraph was omitted. No doubt it is more terse, spirited, and forcible in the first edition, and therefore more calculated to give offence, but its substance is fairly given in subsequent editions.

only be communicated by teaching. I quite agree with Sainte Beuve¹ and others, that these impassioned expressions might under certain circumstances be liable to abuse; still I think they are more than justified by the exigencies of the time, and by the imperative need of some counteracting influence to the immoral Christianity then prevalent.² For my part I classify Charron's noble appeal with the stern denunciation against 'Religion without Integrity,' which we have in Isaiah and others of the Hebrew prophets; and in certain well-known utterances of Jesus Christ; while the principle that service to God consists mainly in virtue or 'sanctified morality' I regard as the fundamental law of Christianity as it is laid down in the Sermon on the Mount. Charron but claimed for his Integrity the prerogative which Milton assigns to its synonym:—

'She can teach ye how to climb
Higher than the sphery chime;
Or if *virtue* feeble were,
Heaven itself would stoop to her.'

The mingled boldness and originality of our moral philosopher brought on him, as might have been expected, no small amount of obloquy and persecution,³ and his 'wisdom' produced, as human

¹ *Causeries de Lundi*, xi. 258, 9: 'Charron ici, dans sa definition tant de la probité que de la religion, et du lien qui les unit, a été tout occupé d'éviter à son homme de bien la crainte des châtimens futurs pour unique principe d'action, et il a trop oublié la charité et l'amour.'—p. 259.

² The comment of M. Etienne, in his *Essai sur La Mothe le Vayer*, on Charron's bold expressions seems worth quoting: 'Voilà des maximes hardies, dont on pourra peut-être abuser; mais qu'on les place en leur lieu, dans un livre destiné aux gens qui pensent; en leur temps, à la suite de la ligue, entre le meurtre de Henri III et celui de Henri IV; qu'on les place au milieu d'un siècle de confusion et de troubles, où il se fit tant de mal au nom de la plus sainte des religions, et l'on comprendra que la danger alors n'était pas à dire ces paroles, mais à ne les dire pas; on comprendra que la religion même, en tant qu'elle est faite pour l'humanité, avait besoin du secours de toutes les facultés humaines; que, pour procurer l'alliance si désirée de la raison et de la foi, il fallait laisser la raison croître et grandir en liberté, prouver sa force.'—P. 73.

³ Compare Voltaire:—

'Montaigne, cet auteur charmant
Tour à tour profond et frivole
Dans son chateau paisiblement
Loin de tout frondeur malévole,
Doutait de tout impunement,
Et se moquait tres-librement
Des bavards fourrés de l'Ecole;
Mais quand son élève Charron

wisdom is occasionally apt to do, a rather abundant crop of controversial folly and malignity. He did what he could to allay the wounded feelings of friends and unfriends, without, so far as appears, any compromise of essential principles. A comparison of the first with the second edition of his work serves to show that the alterations he himself made consisted rather in softening down harsh expressions, in expanding what seemed too contracted, and explaining what was doubtful, than in any real modification of opinion.¹ While his amended edition was going through the press, he died; but the malice of his enemies continued to rage for some years longer round the monument of free-thought and disinterested virtue he bequeathed to the world in the *De la Sagesse*.²

Plus retenu, plus methodique
De Sagesse donna leçon,
Il fut pres de périr, dit on,
Par la haine theologique.'

But as Sainte Beuve says, 'Charron ne fut nullement près de périr.' In fact, he had too many powerful friends, both lay and ecclesiastical, to make such a catastrophe at all probable. This circumstance stood him in good stead when his amended version of *De la Sagesse* was about to be published after his death. See *Life*, prefixed to M. Duval's edition.

¹ As an example of the manner in which the second edition is altered from the first, may be instanced Charron's account of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. In the first edition, he said of the doctrine, 'c'était la chose la plus utilement creue, la plus faiblement prouvée et établie par raisons et moyens humains' (first edition, Bk. i. ch. xv.), which he altered in the second edition to the words, 'la plus utilement creue, *aucunement* (*i.e.* in a certain fashion), assez prouvée par plusieurs raisons naturelles et humaines, mais proprement et mieux établie par le ressort de la religion que par tout autre moyen' (second edition, Bk. i. ch. viii., Duval, vol. i. p. 73). The precise difference between the 'plus faiblement prouvée' of the former, and the 'aucunement assez prouvée' of the latter, may be left to causists, but it is clear that the latter expresses an unsatisfactory, and therefore an *infirm* proof. Besides amending the first edition of the *Sagesse*, Charron issued an abstract of it called *le Petit Traicté de la Sagesse*, of which Le Vayer remarks (Prom. vi., Œuv. Comp., Dresden, iv. 194), that it is almost ('presque') a refutation of the larger work. A comparison of the two will satisfy an unprejudiced reader that the qualification is one urgently needed, and requires to be strongly emphasized. On the whole subject of Charron's supposed modifications of the views expressed in the first edition of his *Sagesse*, compare Bayle, *Dict.*, v. 'Charron,' note O: apropos of these alterations, which he truly says, are mostly verbal, Bayle remarks, 'En plusieurs rencontres on ne parait héretique que par les manières de s'exprimer.'

² Charron's principal enemies were the Jesuit Garasse, who, with the unmeasured invective too common to theological controversy, accuses Charron of brutal atheism!! a physician-named Chanet, and a writer, Dupleix. For some account of these, see Bayle's *Dict.*, Art. 'Charron,' also Ste Beuve, *loc. cit.*

But Charron's religion is not exhausted by the stress he laid upon 'Frud'honie.' As he himself tells us, this quality, though of primary importance, constituted its ethical moiety only, so that his definition of Religion in the sense of personal conviction, *i.e.* the attitude in which he conceived himself to stand towards his Maker, must still be considered. We find, then, in all his works, in his sermons as well as in *The Three Truths* and the *Sagesse*, occasional traces of an esoteric phase of feeling, a mystic self-concentration and devout sentiment, rising occasionally into religious ecstacy, which I think we must take as his own secret religious standpoint, and which serves fully to explain his contempt for the outward rites of religious worship. On this point Charron is in general harmony with many of our skeptics, with whom an undogmatic mysticism seems accepted as a compensation to the religious sentiment for the skepticism and negation of the intellect; but he seems to me in special agreement with the school of Italian free-thinkers whose influence in the South of Europe was at this period very remarkable. We have seen that in 1586 Montaigne gave Charron a work of Ochino's—one of the leading spirits in this movement.

The incident would not be worth notice but for its raising the question how far Charron may have been indebted to these devout rationalists for some of the profounder elements in his religious formation. I do not wish to detract either from the originality of his intellect or the tenderness and depth of his feeling; but the fact remains that his works present us with some features which have a striking resemblance to the doctrines of Ochino¹ and Valdez and other teachers of the same school. Thus Charron was persuaded that religion, on its human side, was individual. It consisted in a spiritual personal intercourse between the believer and his God. It was the worship enjoined by Christ 'in spirit and in truth.' It was free, spiritual, undogmatic, independent of verbal forms, as of all outward acts of worship—the silent adoration of a skeptic, who feared lest audible expressions or visible observances might involve him in dogmatic assertion. His standpoint is so well illustrated by his own words that I must trouble you with a few quotations. In the first of his collected discourses he has a remarkable sermon on 'the Know-

¹ It may be worth noting that in Ochino's *Catechism*, which Montaigne gave Charron, we have the following points of affinity with the doctrine of the latter. A distinct flavour of skepticism after the manner of Descartes. The self-dependence and autocracy of the human consciousness. The conception of worship as an exalted state of feeling. The definition of Religion as consisting of piety and human duty. Comp. Dr. Bérnath's work above mentioned, p. 294.

ledge of God,¹ in which, after denouncing all formal modes of naming, defining and worshipping God, and declaring our utter ignorance of Him, he thus concludes: 'Closing this my first sermon, I exhort each of you to enter into himself, and to worship God in spirit and in truth, by all the holiest and highest conceptions and perfect imaginations possible—with the conviction that all these, and as many more as may be, remain infinitely beneath Him who is incomprehensible to every creature and who can only be known to Himself. . . . And so doing, to submit and resign yourself purely and simply to Him, heartily desiring and demanding to be in His favour, for that is the sovereign good; and this is true religion.'²

And in another passage of the same sermon, in which the mystical element is yet more apparent, after speaking of the dogmatic modes in which men ordinarily think and speak of God, he continues: 'but there is another way more noble, fruitful and honourable, more agreeable to God and safer for ourselves, which does not treat Him in the fashion of the schools, does not consist of words and precepts—for all these are rudimentary preparations and crude exercises for comprehending Him. It is—a serious, cordial, humble and silent contemplation, admiration and worship, born of a holy elevation of soul, by means of which the mind, having first stirred up with all its force its imagination, to the highest possible conception, to the greatest, most complete goodness, power, wisdom, majesty, perfection, conceivable; then recognising that all these imaginations are as nothing, and that it cannot advance further or mount higher (for it is an abyss without end, without foundation, without limit), it finally remains, as in an ecstasy, altogether bewildered and transformed. This method puts a stop to discourse and words—seizes the whole soul, fills it and endues it with a very great reverence, respect, adoration, love, devotion towards that infinitude of perfections within which it remains altogether captivated and enclosed.'³ The mental phase and direction of thought presented to us by these extracts seem to me important.

There are certain recondite profound potentialities, occasional, perhaps rare moods of feeling, casual outbursts of passion, which enter into every great human character, producing, it may be, a somewhat distorting effect on it as a whole; but which, like the aberrations in a planet's orbit, must be taken into account in a scientific

¹ See M. A. Duval's ed. of *De la Sagesse*, vol. iii. p. 329. This is the first sermon in his collection of *Discours Chrétiens*.

² *Loc. cit.*, p. 342.

³ *Loc. cit.*, p. 349. The conclusion of the passage is still more expressive of the devout rapture of the mystic.

determination of its actual course, and the various forces which govern it. These evidences of deep religious emotion, in the case of a thinker like Charron, are of especial value as indications of pietistic feeling and aspiration, such as the general tone of his writings would have hardly prepared us to expect. It proves at least that the emotional coldness so often, and generally so justly, charged to austere moralists, has no place in him. Not that I regard his mysticism as an absorbing passion; it probably occupied just as small a portion of his life as it did of his actual works. The bent of his intellect was too rationalistic, his conception of human duty too practical, to allow much play to mere transcendentalism; but I think these extracts prove his undoubted capacity for such states of feeling, and are fair presumptions, notwithstanding his Pyrrhonism, of his real piety.

Although I have now touched upon the principal features of Charron's skepticism as well as of other constituents of his mental character, something remains to be added on the practical applications of his theory, which take up the latter half of his *Sagesse*.

Having moulded his ideal sage, and endued him with the highest motive principles both of speculation and action, he apportions him his place and duties in the manifold relations of human existence. 'Nostre livre,' he says, 'instruit à la vie civile et forme un homme pour le monde.' Accordingly he prescribes for him his conduct in every conceivable position and under every variety of circumstance, as ruler or subject, master or servant, married or single, parent or child, friend or enemy, free or imprisoned, healthy or sick, etc., etc. He commences with a dissertation on Political Philosophy and the mutual duties of kings and subjects. Charron's treatment of this subject has a twofold interest: 1. It enables us to ascertain how far his undoubted love of freedom in speculation was combined with a due appreciation of political liberty. 2. It serves to show the influence which the stormy events of his time had in the formation of his theories as to statecraft and civil polity. With regard to the first, Charron makes no approach, any more than does Montaigne himself, to the undisguised republicanism which marks *The Voluntary Servitude* of La Boëtie. On the other hand he insists on the autocratic and independent power which he holds to be the unalienable prerogative of all legitimate princes. Still he no less distinctly lays down that this power is not to be used selfishly, or for any mere personal aggrandisement. The supreme law of the prince should be the public welfare. 'Salus populi, suprema lex.' The prince, he says, 'should think that he has nothing he can properly reckon his own—he owes himself to his subjects.'¹ We may, I think, ascribe to the political

¹ Vol. ii. p. 317.

and social disturbances which marked the whole of his life, the fact that these counsels of moderation and distinct intimations of the true basis of constitutional government, are occasionally overpowered by as distinct recommendations, under given circumstances, of a crafty and absolutist policy. In cases of secret conspiracy, *e.g.* he inculcates a more than Machiavellian astuteness and treacherous cunning; but at this, I confess, I am not surprised. Charron's precepts are to be read and interpreted by the events which were passing around him. He was thirty-five years of age when the Holy League was organized with the ostensible object of uniting the chief Catholic Powers in a crusade against Protestants and heretics. In the earlier progress of this undertaking Charron seems to have taken so warm an interest, that he was called 'the eloquent missionary of the League.' Latterly, however, when his extreme Catholic principles had become impaired by a growing affection for liberty both civil and religious, as well as by the discovery that the ultimate object of the League was the aggrandisement of the Guises, he warmly protested against its treacherous machinations, as well as the unconstitutional doctrine it finally promulgated, *viz.* that in case of incapable sovereigns, killing was no murder.¹

Without entering further on the political history of the time, we may at least allow that Charron's judgment is declared in favour of that alternative which had most likelihood of political and religious freedom to recommend it.

But our skeptic is not content with defining the policy of the ruler to his own subjects, and in every conceivable variety of circumstance in times of peace. He is equally explicit on the best method of waging war on a foreign foe. The requisites of a successful campaign; the comparative advantages of mercenaries and native soldiers; the best method of winning battles, of making treaties, and generally, the manifold duties of a successful general are dwelt upon with almost as great minuteness as if the author had been brought up to the noble profession of arms, or had expected that his military 'wisdom' would become the school of successful soldiers for ever

¹ Charron's own account of his change of sentiment on the subject of the League may be seen in a letter found in the appendix to M. Duval's edition of the *De la Sagesse*, written, as we are assured, to a Doctor of the Sorbonne in April, 1589 (just four months before the assassination of Henry III.). In this interesting fragment Charron vehemently protests against the doctrine mentioned in the text, which had indeed been publicly promulgated by a decree of the Sorbonne in 1587. It seems not improbable that this warm expostulation to his friend was called forth by this decree. See *De la Sagesse*, vol. iii. appendix, pp. 349-358.

after. Most readers of this part of Charron's book would, I think, be inclined to suggest that a little of that skeptical self-distrust which he is so fond of recommending, as the panacea for all human evils, would be a wholesome ingredient in the discussion of topics so alien to his own profession and experience. But the art of war constituted at that time so large a part of a monarch's duties, that any treatment of kingly 'wisdom' which did not include it might, perhaps, have been considered incomplete; and it was clearly Charron's intention to make his treatise as full and comprehensive as possible.

Notwithstanding the adverse opinion of some critics, I do not myself think that Charron's method of Education (Book iii. chap. 14) owes more to Montaigne than other portions of his system. There are, of course, striking resemblances: both lay stress upon the same elementary principles. Like his master, Charron insists on the superiority of prudence (*Sagesse*) to knowledge, of native common sense to mere book-learning; indeed, he carries this principle to such an excess that his highest ideal of human excellence is a kind of virtuous and intellectual ignoramus—an impossible monstrosity, which happily could only exist in the imagination of Charron or his master. Similarly he lays stress on the advantages of the Sokratic elenchus, on the duty of following Nature, of receiving nothing on credit or by authority; in short, on the usual rudiments of what may be called a skeptical, or at least undogmatic, system of education.¹ But intermingled with these characteristic precepts, there are, I am bound to add, not a few wholesome maxims, the value of which are recognized in some of the improved methods of teaching employed in our own day. He attaches importance, *e.g.* to physical education—moulding and strengthening the body as well as the mind—making their studies pleasant to children, encouraging them to ask for information, and to give their own ideas and impressions on the different subjects of their education, etc. But taking his system as a whole, it seems to me to suffer so much from its strongly skeptical bias as to be only fitted to produce youthful and precocious Montaignes and Charrons—doubtless the result most desiderated by its author, though in my opinion, one scarcely advantageous to humanity.

I do not think we need investigate further the numerous ramifications and practical details of this part of our author's *Sagesse*. In his desire of thoroughness he, as you may have noticed, pursues his theme with a minuteness of elaboration which is frequently excessive, and occasionally even grotesque and ridiculous.² We are moreover sufficiently acquainted with the main principles of his

¹ See preceding chap., p. 468.

² Cf. *e.g.* vol. iii. p. 72.

system; and all that is necessary is to apply them as far as possible to the practical regulation of human conduct. We might indeed condense the whole of the third book into a few pithy maxims, *e.g.* 'In speculation be skeptical and indifferent. In practice be prudent and honest. In all things be moderate and self-distrustful. So you may attain tranquillity of mind, and be able to face death without alarm.' Such, epitomized, is Charron's 'wisdom.' No doubt it is the wisdom of Cato and Seneca rather than that of Christ; or rather it exhibits the stern ethics of Christianity insufficiently qualified by its profound pathos, its sublime tenderness, its meekness, gentleness, and patience. It is the Christianity that denounced the hypocrisy of scribes and Pharisees rather than that which manifested love and sympathy for little children, and was filled with an infinite compassion for the weak, helpless and fallen. Still, as I have already suggested, its very imperfections, considered as a general code of religion and ethics, may be said to constitute its special fitness for reforming the French society of his time. Its skeptical suspense was a needed protest against the overweening dogmatism of the Catholic on the one hand and the Huguenot on the other; besides being calculated, as Charron supposed, to prepare the way for the moral regeneration of his countrymen. Its broad, genial eclecticism was a necessary outcome of the Renaissance and a much needed substitution of cosmopolitan culture for the narrow teaching of Schoolmen and theologians. Its resolute independence of thought, in principle if not always in application, was probably as great an approximation to Protestantism as Catholic France was capable of receiving. Its stern and unselfish morality was the best antidote to the corruption and profligacy of the age; while the moderation and indifference it inculcated was an emphatic reproach to a society in which human passions, feelings, and motives of conduct were frequently carried to a mischievous and ungovernable excess.

We are now, I think, in a position to 'place' our skeptic among the free-thinkers of his own epoch, whether French or Italian; and our task is made the easier by his possession of specific qualities which, taken in the aggregate, mark him from every other free-thinker. Charron is not a mere colourless skeptic, devoid of all principles and convictions. His skepticism, as I have pointed out, is methodical. He acts on the maxim: Disbelieve that you may believe. Deny that you may affirm. Nor again is he a mere plagiarist. To regard him, as some critics do, as an echo of Montaigne, reproducing his thoughts without acknowledgment, and using the *Essais* merely as the quarry to supply him with materials for building his own Temple of Wisdom, is doing him the greatest

possible injustice. The influence of the *Essais* is more corroborative than originating. What degree of free-thought Charron might have attained had he never known Montaigne and his works it is useless to ask, but I believe it would not have differed much from his actual standpoint, which, both in audacity and mental freedom, I regard as considerably in advance of Montaigne.

The peculiarities which differentiate Charron's skepticism seem to me :—

1. The unrestrained application of his skepticism to all religions.
2. His definition of and stress on 'Prud'homie.'
3. His general sympathy with modern and liberal ideas.

I. Charron derived his skepticism, so far as it was not the native product of his own restless inquiring intellect, from two sources: the Classics, and the *Essais* of Montaigne. Without possessing Montaigne's knowledge of antiquity, or sharing his desire to display it, Charron's acquaintance with classical authors was very considerable. There are few writers whom he does not quote either in *The Three Verities* or in the *Sagesse*. He is therefore a child of the Renaissance equally with his master, and from the same sources he not unnaturally draws the same conclusion; but his chiefest lesson was Skepticism; the sages of antiquity agreeing in this respect with the philosophy of Montaigne and with his own researches. All affirm that truth is impossible to man. All the methods and instruments he can employ in its investigation are self-convicted of weakness, vacillation and error. The senses, reason, common opinion, the conclusions of philosophers, laws, social customs are all shown to be uncertain. Here then naturally faith and revelation come in. Religion must supply the defects of the reason. Charron not only allows its mission in this respect, but like so many other ecclesiastical skeptics, pleads for it. The function of Pyrrhonism is to prepare the way for faith. The philosophic mind is like white paper on which anything may be inscribed. But when he comes to consider what impression is likely to be inscribed on such a skeptical "*tabula rasa*," by the ecclesiasticism of Rome, Charron is filled with doubt and apprehension. Is then, he asks, this Christianity the only Divine revelation, the sole exponent of the will of God. He has no choice but to reply in the negative. Christianity only possesses an existence of a few centuries. It is also limited in space. There must have been some prior revelation of God's will. And this *à priori* necessity is shown to be a fact by the wisdom and enlightenment of great nations who lived before the coming of Christ. Thus Charron accepts the theory of Raymund of Sabieude of a Natural

Religion prior to those contained in the Bible. But it is instructive to observe the changes which the theory undergoes. Raymund, you will remember, makes his Natural Theology an introduction to Romanist dogma. Montaigne and the Italian philosophers gave the original teaching of Nature a wider and fuller scope, accepting as its dictates, principles and conduct more or less non-moral and unrestrained; while Charron makes the outcome of the Natural Reason to be human duty—the morality of the Stoics. But the problem remains unsolved: What is the relation of this natural, primary law of human prudence (Prud'homie) to the demands of Roman ecclesiasticism, to the routine of religious worship, prayers, sacrifices, sacraments? At this point Charron's peculiarity breaks forth. Other skeptics had questioned or denied the truth of Roman dogma; Charron throws doubt also on the wisdom and appropriateness of its modes of worship. All those pious usages were, when well examined, absurd; they denoted not man's strength but his weakness; they proved not his truth but his error. I have already hinted that this conception was confirmed (not improbably, indeed, was first suggested) by the demonstrated inefficiency of external and ritual worship in the debased condition of the sixteenth-century Romanism, to make men good moral citizens. But another conception aided him in forming the same conclusion, *i.e.* his profound conviction of human wretchedness and shortcoming. Man could no more discover or approach God by his devotional efforts than he could attain truth by his intellectual energies. Outward acts of worship therefore assumed to Charron the likeness of dogmas—external expressions of theories which he regarded as inconclusive, and from which he fled to pietistic feeling and aspiration. Possibly, too, his spiritual insight detected the truth that the ordinary methods by which men approach God are necessarily unworthy of His own spirituality and infinity. Material buildings, outward rites, puerile symbols and elements had long arrogated in the Church a position and sanctity out of all proportion to their intrinsic importance. Assuming this to be the basis of his reasoning, Charron's protest against religious rites partakes of the polemical attitude of Luther and Calvin against the observances of Rome; but, of course, going far beyond those dogmatists in freedom and audacity. Charron is thus the only free-thinker on our list who applies his skepticism to religious worship of every kind; and this, too, without seeming to consider the doctrines of the Church of Rome, except so far as they are included in his general estimate of all truth as uncertain. This characteristic distinguishes him therefore from those numerous skeptics who attacked the dogmas of the Church, and passed over her worship in silence.

II. But there was another reason why Charron should have attacked the external acts of all religions alike. They constituted the weakness of Romanism. Their performance enabled the evil, immoral man to claim the title of Religious. They were therefore directly hostile to Charron's own chosen virtue of Prud'homie. From this point of view Charron's skepticism is not only defensible but commendable. All ethical reformers have to contend with an exaggerated estimate of the moral value and practical efficacy of acts of religious worship. Charron's Prud'homie partakes of the character of that duty which Christ himself substituted for 'whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.' Not that I think Charron had any distinct notion that in rehabilitating and restoring Prud'homie to its place in human existence he was bringing back the main characteristic of Christ's own teaching. As I have already pointed out, the skeptical development, marked by the advance of the *Sagesse* above *The Three Truths*, is accompanied by an inferior estimate of Christianity. In the latter work Christianity is contrasted with other religions, and shown to be superior in point of morality and other qualities¹; but in the *Sagesse* a different standpoint is adopted, which may be described as an accentuation of Montaigne's principle, that the religion of any country or people is like its name—a geographical expression, and that a diversity of nations and races require a diversity of religions and modes of worship. This is indeed one of Charron's favourite ideas, and he does not hesitate to speak in the plural of 'true religions,' meaning, I presume, those that preserve the essential features of Christianity. Hence I think Dr. Trevor mistaken in his Essay on Montaigne, when he seemed to say that the great essayist cherished a fond retrospect of the first pure form of Christianity as a counteractive to ecclesiastical corruption. The standpoint of Montaigne and, in a lesser degree, of Charron, was altogether different. The only Christianity they admitted as authoritative was its Romanist form; and though they recognized its evolutionary character, they did not care to discriminate carefully stages in which truth became gradually transformed to falsehood and purity to corruption.² Their golden age of humanity was pre-Christian antiquity—the revelation antecedent to all others of Nature, Reason, and Morality. Charron saw that the virtue of Prud'homie, or

¹ *Les Trois Vérités*, Book ii., pp. 107-150. See especially p. 147, where the distinctive excellencies of Christianity are brought together in a passage of great eloquence.

² One exception to this general remark, so far as it applies to Charron's *Sagesse*, may be found in a passage pointing out how Christ destroyed the sacrificial rites, etc., of the Mosaic law:—'Et en fin le fils de Dieu, Docteur de Vérité, estant venu pour sevrer et desniaiser le monde, les a du tout abolis etc.'—Vol. i. p. 262.

integrity, existed as an authoritative principle independently both of the Jewish and Christian revelations. It was a rule of conduct taught by pagans, and exemplified by their lives. It was the first Book of Raymund of Sabieude—the primary Religion of Nature.

Few comments on the degeneracy and baneful influence of Romanism, as it presented itself to the thinkers of the fifteenth and sixteenth century, are more striking than their eagerness to appeal directly to Nature as the ultimate sanction of human duty; and their inability, as a rule, to appreciate the teaching of Christ Himself on this subject. Montaigne and Charron are on this point followed by all the French skeptics of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Some allowance no doubt, should be made for thinkers like the former, who were formed by the Renaissance and who shared its delirium of classicalism. The ages of pagan virtue, as they conceived them, were on the whole more enlightened than as well as ethically superior to the 'Ages of Faith.' They saw antiquity through the coloured glasses of its best literary and human products. Athens in its best days was a society of men like Sokrates, Plato, Aristotle, Aristides, etc. Rome was a municipality of citizens resembling Brutus, the Gracchi, Cicero, Cato, and Seneca. Nay, even setting aside these rarer products of culture, and having regard only to less civilized communities, they preferred a state of society more simple and unsophisticated, more natural and unpretending, more free in thought and speculation, and especially less contaminated by those peculiarly hateful vices that followed in the train of dominant ecclesiasticism—hypocrisy, greed, lust, tyranny, bigotry and cruelty. Even the savage customs of uncivilized races were preferable to some of the usages of Christianized societies. As Montaigne remarked, Cannibalism as a social institution was more humane and less discreditable to civilization than the tortures of the Inquisition. However much, therefore, some may regret the fact, we cannot feel surprised that Charron looked back beyond the confines of Palestine and the time-limits of A.D. for the first indications of a universal revelation, or that, like Tyndal, he should have made his Christianity to be 'as old as the creation.'

No small merit must, in my opinion, be assigned to Charron in thus giving to Natural Theology a distinctively ethical aspect. He thus contrasts favourably with most free-thinkers among his own countrymen, from Montaigne to Rousseau, who have gone to Nature for their religion. At the same time there is no philosophical attempt to connect his Prud'homie with the outward rites or profession of religion. He says vaguely that Prud'homie ought to produce religion, apparently meaning that the same policy of duty which impels a man to ethical conduct ought also to stimulate him to the pietistic

feeling and recognition of the Supreme Being. Without religion, he says, Prud'homie becomes Atheism ; while religion divorced from Prud'homie becomes what is even worse—hypocrisy, tyranny and immorality. But he is not very solicitous to make his Prud-homie claim kindred with ecclesiastical usages or express itself by their means. Ultimately he seems inclined to leave the two poles of his belief, God and Morality, standing somewhat apart as external facts, or truths, though not altogether dis severed in the spiritual consciousness, and he deprecates any attempt to reconcile them as likely to result in the loss of independence and autonomy, which are the inherent prerogatives of each.

III. Not the least remarkable feature in Charron's *Sagesse* are its numerous approximations to theories and ideas which have become current in the present century. He seems especially permeated with evolutionary notions. He has no hesitation in admitting, *e.g.* that all religions are growths—the natural developments of certain elementary truths and feelings. To use his words: 'They all agree in many things, have for the most part the same principles and foundations, accord as to their subject, hold the same progress and proceed at the same rate. Further, they have all taken birth nearly in the same climate and air. All of them invent and supply miracles, prodigies, oracles, sacred mysteries, saints, prophets, holy days, certain articles of faith and belief presumably needful to salvation. All are in their origin and first commencement small, weak, and humble ; but little by little, through the following and sympathetic acclamation of adherents, together with the aid of attractive fictions, they have taken root and become authorized, so that all of them, even the most absurd, are maintained with affirmation and devotion.'¹ We have thus the rudiments of Comparative Theology. It illustrates Charron's free-thought that he readily accepts what must always be an axiom of every such science, *i.e.* the co-equality in kind of all the great religions of the world. I need not point out that such a belief harmonizes with his opinion already mentioned—that the religions of nations and races are, like their other characteristics, determined by given conditions in their surroundings. A fair deduction from these ratiocinations would be the complete indifference of all religions, but that is not Charron's conclusion. Against his idea of the intolerance, superstitions, and absurdities which attach to all religions must be placed his discrimination between Religion and Superstition. He frequently, too, urges on his wise man the due observance of the religious rites prescribed by the Church as being both obligatory,

¹ *De la Sagesse*, ed. 1, p. 352.

regarded as a duty to God, and beneficial to the sage himself. Charron's modern spirit is especially manifested in his account of the diversities of thought and life which pertain to the inhabitants of different countries. The larger portion of the first Book of his *Sagesse* (chaps. 37 to 53) is taken up with this congenial theme, on which Montaigne and Le Vayer also delighted to expatiate. Charron almost vies with Mr. Buckle in the importance he attaches to man's physical surroundings, and their influence on his mind no less than his body. Another resemblance to current theorizing is found in his denial that animals are distinct from men in respect of their moral qualities. He agrees with Montaigne that all the attributes generally classed as moral have been found in the lower animals, though his proofs, like those of Montaigne's, will not bear investigation. Incidentally, too, I may notice that Charron prefers cremation to ordinary modes of burial, probably instigated in this, as in other preferences, by his enthusiasm for classical antiquity.

Charron's skepticism, I have already admitted, is largely due to his intellectual idiosyncrasy. He was essentially a many-sided thinker. If we cannot say that he was a believer in two-fold truth, it is only for the reason that his conception of truth was manifold. He is almost as 'ondoyant' as his master. His philosophical works abound in contradictions. Thus if he ridicules religions as absurd, he also commends and enjoins them as necessary parts of wisdom. He both maintains and rejects the notion of Revelation. Christianity is superior to other religions, and it is not. If he inveighs in one place against the atrocities perpetrated in the name of religion, he in another recommends his wise prince to 'chastise rudely' those who attempted to make any innovations in the religion of the state. If he eulogizes Pyrrhonic suspense, he announces his own convictions in a tone that betrays no trace of hesitancy or uncertainty. If he disapproves the employment of future rewards and punishments to influence human action, he nevertheless admits that of all tenets of the same kind immortality is most usefully believed. If he insists on the priority of Prud'homie to religion as Nature to Grace, he also in one instance makes Grace the needed pre-requisite for moral virtue. It is clear that Charron, though infinitely more methodical than Montaigne, was not careful to preserve a strict consistency and uniformity in his writings. The effect of this would have been to prevent his free expatiation among the multifarious contents of the universe and the countless inconsistencies that pertain to humanity. He claimed in the preface to the first edition of the *Sagesse* to use in his writings Academic and philosophical liberty; and he made ample use of this self-imparted freedom.

But among all his vacillations and inconsistencies, the uncertainties and mutabilities of his speculation, two main truths stand out prominently and boldly, like two rocks in a stormy sea, occasionally submerged beneath the waves and tides, but certain to reappear sooner or later. These are Religion and Integrity, or God and human duty—in other words, the two fundamental truths of Christianity demanded by its Founder. For this reason he appears to me to stand on a much higher pedestal, as a teacher of humanity, than Montaigne. It would be impossible to find in the *Essais* anything like that panegyric on Prud'homie, or that ecstatic contemplation of God, which I quoted and described to you. Montaigne's commendation of moral duty is always cold and indifferent, as if it were a needed but painful sacrifice to social custom and prejudice; whereas nothing can be more fervent and enthusiastic than Charron's glorification of Prud'homie. A still greater distinction would pertain to their respective estimates of religious feeling. A further difference, moreover, relates to their degree of skepticism. Montaigne's 'Quoi scais je' represents the skeptic who is so vacillating and frivolous that he does not care even to pronounce on his own Nescience. Whereas Charron's motto, 'Je ne scay,' represents the thinker who has determined his own personal condition of Nescience, and is not afraid to avouch it.

There can be no doubt that Charron was professedly a Pyrrhonist, though I do not think he made his negation absolute. When the charge of Pyrrhonic skepticism is preferred against him, he meets it partly with evasion and partly by alleging that the value of a principle should be judged by its use, and the results it seems likely to attain. But the Pyrrhonism he thus pleads guilty to is, in point of fact, not genuine Pyrrhonism at all; I mean, it is not absolute suspense in and for its own sake. 'It is needful,' he says, 'to remove one thing before replacing it by another, to drive forth the old possessor before establishing the new. Purge out the old leaven, put off the old man,' he exclaims, with an application of St. Paul's language which would, I think, have astonished its author not a little. 'Having gained this point,' he proceeds, 'and rendered men Academics or Pyrrhonists, we may propose the principles of Christianity as a revelation from heaven.'¹ As you may suppose, I am far from thinking Charron's method free from objection; it suffers from that fatal dichotomy which we have considered in our discussion on twofold truth; but I think the end he had in view, the moral regeneration of his country, was noble, imperatively necessary, and in the truest sense of the word, Christian.

¹ *Le Petit Traicté in De la Sagesse*, vol. iii. p. 311.

Considered as a contribution to French literature, the success of Charron's *Wisdom* is undoubted. Together with Montaigne's *Essays* and Le Vayer's works, it formed the staple of French popular literature on the subjects of religion and morality during the latter half of the seventeenth century. If Montaigne's *Essais* was the breviary of men of the world, Charron's *Wisdom* was the gospel of the more serious and reflective among French thinkers,¹ who were not quite content with the teaching which the Gascon philosopher *seemed* to inculcate, and to leave ordinary moral duty an open question. Both works were pioneers of new methods of thought and inquiry. Both ostensibly taking their ground on the outside of mediæval Catholicism, and contributed not a little to impair its exclusive authority. Moreover both tended to the enlargement and secularization of human thought, which in France, as in Italy, was, as we have seen, the form which the Reformation mostly assumed. Hence they occupy the same position in France as the *Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum*, or the popular writings of Luther in Germany. To call Montaigne and Charron the French representatives of Luther and Calvin² would seem an exaggeration, almost an historical paradox; but it is certain that taking the nation throughout, if they cannot claim the title, there are none others on whom it can be conferred, for the influence of Ramus, though of a higher kind, was too exclusively academic to merit it. French Protestantism cannot claim to have been then, any more than it is now, a really popular movement. It lacks, or appears to me to lack, the primary attribute of life—growth. There are, perhaps, reasons of race why Protestantism, with its gravity, its deeply religious spirit, its resolute attempt to harmonize belief with practice on the one hand, and with knowledge on the other, is unsuited for the French nation as a whole. Such 'wisdom' as Charron's, therefore, seems to me to represent pretty accurately that combination of religion and philosophy, of faith and skepticism, of freedom and restriction, by which Frenchmen have ever been most

¹ As M. Etienne puts it, 'Si Montaigne était le breviaire des libres penseurs, Charron fut leur drapeau.'—*Essai sur La Mothe le Vayer*, p. 70. Another critic quoted by Sainte Beuve, *Causeries du Lundi*, xi. p. 267, speaks of persons 'qui prenaient Charron pour Socrate, et l'*Apologie de Raimond Sebond* pour l'*Évangile*.'

² Most writers make Descartes the real founder of French free-thought, and ascribe to him an influence in France analogous to that of Luther in Germany, but we must remember that the critical and destructive portions of his system had long been anticipated, not only by Montaigne and Charron, but also by La Vayer, whose *Dialogues of Oratius Tubero*, published in 1633, preceded by four years Descartes', *Discours de la Methode*. See M. Etienne's *Essai sur La Mothe le Vayer*, p. 28.

attracted.¹ Hence it possesses a kind of national significance ; for although the book is now hardly anything more than a literary fossil—an antiquated memorial of advanced speculation some three centuries since, yet like similar remains in geology, it represents organisms that still live and move around us. It is typical of modes of thought and speculation, which seem permanently engrained in the French character. If Montaigne be, as Sainte Beuve asserts, the wisest Frenchman that ever lived, Charron's *Sagesse*, which systematized him, may claim to be a general exponent of *French wisdom* ; and I think you will agree with me that Frenchmen might easily have a worse.

* * * * *

After the customary vote of thanks :—

ARUNDEL (rolling up his MS.). Well, ladies and gentlemen, what do you think of my French Solomon, the author of the most noteworthy 'Book of Wisdom' of modern times?

MISS LEYCESTER. I should think the better of him if he had not chosen such a presumptuous title. You have pointed out how well the distinction between Montaigne's query 'Quoi sçais je?' and Charron's resolute 'Je ne seay' marks the different characters of the men. A similar difference is, I think, indicated by the titles of their works, Montaigne's tentative *Essais* contrasted with Charron's positive *Wisdom*.

HARRINGTON. Charron's title is but the expression of an opinion, common, necessarily, to all skeptics,—that wisdom and skepticism are to a certain extent identical. You could hardly have expected him to call his favourite mode of thought—*folly*. And, taking his work as a whole, I do not think his title arrogates more than thoughtful readers would willingly concede. 'Wisdom' seems to me 'justified of her Charron,' if I may venture to transpose the well-known maxim. What can be nobler, or more in harmony with the highest instincts of mankind, than his eloquent inculcation of disinterested virtue and religion? When will our religious teachers learn to lay due stress on the fact—a fundamental law, I take it, of natural theology—that virtue is its own reward, and vice its own punishment?

¹ Comp. Gabriel Naudé: 'Fou M. le Cardinal Bagni me demanda, un jour quel estoit le meilleur de tous les livres; je lui dis, qu'après la Bible il me sembloit, que c'estoit la *Sagesse* de Charron.'—*Naudiana*, p. 4.

ARUNDEL. When they find that people, especially the more thoughtless and uneducated among the lower classes, are sensibly influenced by such sublime considerations. For many years I have, in my teaching, dispensed as much as possible with extraneous rewards and punishments as incentives to godliness and virtue, but I have found it impossible to do so altogether. Take a not uncommon case in a country parish—a concentration of the worst evils of human existence: poverty, sickness, and friendlessness—and attempt to treat such a case with the palliatives and tonics which the Stoic philosophy furnishes; why, you might just as well treat a violent fever or galloping consumption with homœopathic globules. I remember one especial case which came under my notice a few years ago, in which my patient was sufficiently educated and thoughtful to understand the argument. Her disease was constitutional and painful. When I first began to visit her I attempted to console her by the trite reflection that pain and sickness are necessary incidents in the lot of humanity, the outcome of natural and often inevitable law. Of course she acquiesced, with the justifiable remark that such a consideration did not render her lot more easy. I then dwelt on the duty of patience and resignation as bringing its own reward, and also its probable effect as an example to other sufferers; but I was met with the complaint that she did not know what she had done to be made a scapegoat for others. I pushed this kind of Stoic considerations as far as my office as a Christian minister seemed to warrant; but they were evidently inadequate. She at last told me that were it not for the thought of heaven she would be quite unable to support her trials. No! Stoicism may serve with men of a certain class—men of vigorous minds, sanguine temperaments, and comprehensive views, having their intellectual and moral character braced by education, self-discipline, and reflection; but when we have to teach the poor and comfort the sick, we must employ some more human motive and distinct consolation than its philosophy seems able to impart.

TREVOR. Yet a Stoic or Buddhist might fairly reply that many a virtuous Pagan had suffered injustice and borne pain with calmness and equanimity, who had never heard of the

considerations you speak of. For my own part, I should be sorry to take away any prop to human virtue, patience, and goodness, however unsound or unnecessary it might seem to others. Its value as a prop, we must remember, can only be estimated by the real additional strength it affords, and those who have leant on and tested it are better judges of this than mere onlookers can be. Of course, genuine perfection, the sublime both in religion and ethics, can only be attained by making the motives and sanctions in either case as free from the adulteration of human selfishness as possible. The very idea of a prop implies imperfection, however inevitable. . . . But meanwhile we are forgetting Charron, and I must avow my own dissent from your theory of his skepticism. I do not think that it is adopted as a mere preliminary to ethical teaching; on the contrary I think it is as complete and absolute as we could have expected. His occasional concessions to religious orthodoxy I regard as a kind of *arrière pensée*—a faint echo of convictions in which he had been brought up, and which would sometimes assert themselves in spite of his volition. Moreover, absolute morality—the categorical imperative of ethics—is, as we know, a very frequent accompaniment of unlimited skepticism. Indeed, such an unconditional assertion is the only harbour of refuge left to the enquirer who has thrown overboard the ballast of caution and human opinion, and has abandoned sail and helm to the guidance of free speculation. Such thinkers as Kant and John Stuart Mill found anchorage there after traversing restlessly the great ocean of metaphysical and moral science, or rather Nescience. That Charron's bark finds its way into the same secure haven is no proof that its course was not determined by similar agency, but is, I submit, some slight presumption of the contrary.

HARRINGTON. Charron's attitude in respect of religion, *i.e.* the imperfection of all religious rites, seems to me strong *prima facie* evidence of a skeptical tendency which is practically unlimited. This, it must be remembered, is the territory of all others in which, on the hypothesis of his partial skepticism, we might have expected clear indications of caution and constraint. But I must confess that I am unable to discover any symptoms of the kind. Besides, whatever his opinions

may have been as to the religious degeneracy and moral laxity of his age, it is not on this ground that he finds fault with religious rites. His animadversions apply with equal force to all conceivable modes of religious worship. The only religion that would have satisfied him would have been Quakerism.

ARUNDEL. I am fully aware that absolute morality is frequently found in combination with the utmost latitude of speculation. Indeed, I regard this compulsory affirmation of elementary truth, after the reasoning faculties have exercised their most destructive powers, as a divinely implanted instinct. Varying Trevor's simile, I should term it a life-boat which is happily always available after every religious and intellectual shipwreck. Still, though the combination be natural, I do not think it inevitable, for immutable morality may be found in conjunction with ordinary dogmatism, as *e.g.* in the case of our own Cudworth,¹ and therefore its forming a principal part of Charron's creed proves nothing as to the extent of his skepticism. That this was really partial I ground upon his repeated explanations of the use and purpose of Pyrrhonism, especially in relation to Christianity. I hardly think we are justified in rejecting his own evidence, and substituting inferences of our own on such a point. As to Harrington's objection, I have already admitted that Charron's language on the subject of religions sounds dangerous; nevertheless, I think his meaning is really innocent. He merely expresses in an exaggerated form what I suppose every reflective man has felt as to the outward rites of religious worship, *i.e.* that the object aimed at is so far above the imperfect means employed that the latter are apt occasionally to seem trivial and utterly disproportionate. This is what we understand by calling such rites the *means* of Grace, language which certainly does not imply inherent perfection. Of course Charron considers the question from the point of view of the intellect; but as a matter of devotional feeling you have a corresponding truth in many an evangelical hymn and prayer. Express the feeling of Solo-

¹ Among English divines, one of the most powerful advocates of immutable truth is Dr. Rust, Bishop of Dromore, concerning whom see Hunt, *History of Religious Thought*, vols. i. and ii., and Tulloch's *Rational Theology*, ii. pp. 433-437.

mon's prayer at the dedication of the temple, or of the well-known verse,—

‘In vain we tune our feeble songs,
In vain we strive to rise;
Hosannahs languish on our tongues,
And our devotion dies,’—

as a logical proposition, and you must perforce use language not dissimilar to Charron's.

MISS LEYCESTER. I really do not see why Dr. Trevor and you, Charles, should throw doubt on Charron's substantial orthodoxy. My theory of him, and I hope no one will try to make it coherent or consistent—that it has precedents to justify it our investigations have abundantly proved—is that he was both a skeptic and an earnest believer. Occasionally, when he mounted his Pegasus of Reason or Nature, he found himself carried by his hard-mouthed steed a little farther than perhaps he wished to go, and he was too honest a man not to avow the fact. At other times and moods, with his intellect (kindled by devout rapture) subdued by devotion and religious sympathy, or else restrained by traditional conscience, his older beliefs returned with something of their former vigour. Charron is in fact, like a few more of our skeptics, a *δίψυχος*, or double-souled man, and for my part I have not the slightest wish to reconcile his antagonisms. He is much more human as he is. As to his orthodoxy, even Bayle, who cannot be accused of any undue prepossession in favour of ecclesiastical orthodoxy, has no doubt on the point, and says, moreover, that there is just as little doubt of his piety.

MRS. HARRINGTON. Is it not a little curious that a free-thinker like Charron should on two occasions have wished to immure himself within the walls of a convent?

ARUNDEL. His motive may have been either studious leisure, or a retreat from the political turmoils of the time. In this, as in other respects, there is a striking parallel between Charron and Huet of Avranches, who retired to the Jesuit home in Paris to end his days.

TREVOR. I suspect, too, that there was then, as perhaps now, more free-thought and inquiry circulating furtively in monkish cells and craniums than we are aware of, especially

when the abbot or prior was himself a scholar and a thinker. It was, however, a fortunate thing for the world that Charron was refused admission, for (it might have been a reaction from an unusual access of devotional fervour) we find him almost directly after sitting at the feet of Montaigne, and probably planning, or at least acquiring, some of the elements of his Book of Wisdom.

MRS. HARRINGTON. I have been waiting to hear whether any of you noticed what seemed to me a contradiction in Mr. Arundel's paper. I mean his account of the relation between Montaigne and Charron. In one place he said that Charron was a more advanced skeptic than Montaigne, in another, that he set himself to oppose his master's extravagancies.

ARUNDEL. I plead guilty to the inconsistency, which is, however, only the shadow thrown by the same attribute in my subject. Charron was, in my opinion, a more advanced skeptic than Montaigne: because his negative was more pronounced, as I observed at the end of my paper; and because he was less cautious and reserved in extending his Pyrrhonism, theoretically at least, into the subject-matter of religious creeds and worship. On the other hand, Charron endeavoured to repress the immorality that was an outcome of the teaching of the *Essais*. On this point his relation to Montaigne resembled that of Sokrates to the Sophists—admitting his own Nescience in speculation, but vigorously reprobating the moral licence that some ethically weak disciples wished to associate with it; and maintaining the innate nobility and authority of virtue, as well as its superiority to the gods themselves. Indeed, I think Charron has many characteristics in common with Sokrates, and that he deserves the title of the 'French Sokrates' much more than Montaigne.

HARRINGTON. One point you incidentally touched upon I should like to have seen expounded, *viz.* Charron's assertion that Atheism can only exist in extremely strong minds—a statement which you think Pascal accepted with a qualification. I know there has always been in France an idea of this kind, 'Esprits forts' being held to be synonymous with Atheists. Now I confess my entire inability to see any valid ground for what I suppose was intended as a laudatory distinction. I

would rather say with La Bruyère, 'Les esprits forts savent-ils qu'on les appelle ainsi par ironie?' The strength assumed to be implied in the rejection of beliefs or rules of conduct professed by an overwhelming majority of mankind, is generally only a subtle form of weakness. The inability of a man to recognise any traces of a Divine mind in the universe is to me a proof of helplessness, or of that curious form of human vanity that loves to proclaim itself eccentric. We may compare it to the similar imbecility that refuses to recognize the binding nature of social and moral restraints. The profligate might just as well confound the weakness that cannot control his passions with the strength supposed to be necessary to despise social barriers on grounds of intellect or reason. . . . That there are men born with a deficient religious insight is just as true as that some are born with deficient perceptions, mental or physical; but it would be a curious inversion of all ordinary processes of reasoning to allow them to boast of their congenital infirmities as proving their superiority to other men. Once allow this argument, and we might go to lunatic asylums for our philosophers and sages.

TREVOR. The whole question is much too large for our short discussions. . . . I however quite agree with you as to the inherent weakness of Atheism. It is weak, as all dogmatism—especially on speculative and inscrutable subjects—is weak. It denies, categorically, what it cannot prove by negative demonstration, admitting such a demonstration to be possible. In any case, the proof of God's non-existence must be infinitely more difficult than that of His existence. The Theist has both a standpoint and a presumption of truth in the undeniable existence of the universe, while the Atheist has to arrive at his conviction in direct opposition to all the bearings of the argument. The only universe that could demonstrate the non-existence of God would be one of absolute vacuity. . . . As to the religious sense, it seems to be an instinct unconsciously developed partly from grounds of reason, partly from impulses of feeling—the capacity for which might become inheritable among Theistic races. Hence I cannot agree with you as to the importance to be attached to its privation in any given case. We must in fairness remember the

myriads of Buddhists who seem quite destitute of the religious sense so far as this implies belief in Deity.

ARUNDEL. You would then, I suppose, allow men to profess Agnosticism on the point?

TREVOR. Agnosticism on any point, not absolutely and imperiously demonstrable, I account a mark of wisdom; but on the subject of God's existence Agnosticism, or a reverent ignorance of Him, is quite compatible with religious feelings and worship. Sokrates, Charron and many more professed Nescience as their ordinary intellectual condition, and yet maintained the duty of religious worship. Besides, I may remind you that faith, taking the most authoritative definition of it, does not presuppose knowledge, but its opposite; *viz.* Nescience; and not a few divines of undeniable orthodoxy have maintained that our best knowledge of God consists in our ignorance of Him. Charron, you have told us, held this opinion. By the way, I noticed in your paper that you called this a paradox; you must have forgotten that it can claim the names of Augustine, Erigena, Abelard and Aquinas.

ARUNDEL. But what they meant by not knowing God was not knowing His qualities, attributes or nature. They knew, or rather confidently believed in His existence; and would have been both surprised and horrified to find their reverent disclaimer of complete knowledge on such a mysterious subject classed as Agnosticism. Charron, I may add, treats the nature of our knowledge of God, in the sermon I have already referred to, with wonderful declamatory power and audacity; in which he pushes the negative side of the argument to its extreme point, but even here he is far removed from absolute suspense.

MISS LEYCESTER. My idea of the matter is that, faith or belief in God's existence, must in final analysis, mean belief in it as a probability—made up of manifold ideas, ratiocinations and feelings, and those dependent in different individuals on various conditions of temperament, training, etc. But I agree with Charles, it is more than absurd to make the avowed absence of all such beliefs a mark of intellectual strength. How far it is true I cannot say, but I have heard it maintained that Atheistic races are singularly unprogressive.

MRS. HARRINGTON. There is a very striking proof of

Charron's wisdom which you have omitted to notice, Mr. Arundel.

ARUNDEL. Very likely. Charron's wisdom is a large mine, and I do not profess to have done more than extract a few specimen nuggets.

MRS. HARRINGTON. I mean his warm devotion to the sun. He was almost a sun-worshipper, was he not? At least he had a favourite saying with which I fully sympathize. He said, 'The sun was his visible god, as God was his invisible sun.'

ARUNDEL. Charron was as much a sun-worshipper as many an old Pagan philosopher. He undoubtedly thought sun-worship reasonable, for he confesses as much. Indeed, he pauses in the midst of a discussion on the Deity to eulogize that particular form of idolatry.

HARRINGTON. Charron's 'wisdom,' I may observe, is very largely of the gnomic order. His book is full of terse and pithy maxims. That you have just quoted is very neatly expressed. . . . But he has many others. Sir William Hamilton's favourite apophthegm—'In the world there is nothing great but man: and in man nothing great but mind'—comes from Charron. Very happily, too, he describes the futility of extreme mysticism, 'Qui veut faire l'ange, fait la bête'—a dictum, by the way, which confirms Arundel's opinion that mysticism could not have exercised a preponderating influence over him. His description of the universal sway of authority, a passage quoted by Arundel, is also a marvel of concentrated wisdom: 'We believe, judge, work, live and die—upon credit.' A fair hit at verbose eulogies of the virtue of silence is contained in the remark, 'To take offence at words is a mark either of great weakness or some touch or guilt of the same malady.' . . . But in point of fact, you can hardly open a page of the *Wisdom*, without coming across some terse and neat apophthegm. Arundel called him the French Solomon; at least he is the author of a fair collection of proverbs.

TREVOR. With his stress on Prud-homie as a law of Nature, Charron comes into our subject appropriately after considering Giordano Bruno and Vanini, in whom Nature-enthusiasm takes the form of intoxication. Arundel has told us that

Charron was a dual thinker, but it is worth noting that his dualism is not that of the Italian philosophers. It is less free and more moral. Bruno, Vanini and Campanella made their antinomies consist of Nature *versus* Theology—understanding by the former term Nature in its nakedness, wildness and totality, unrestrained and undisciplined for the most part by ethical or social considerations of any kind; whereas Charron took the social and rational instinct he observed in man as the antithetical of theology. There was another distinction. The Italian dualists made the opposite poles of their antinomies vehemently opposed to each other: Charron made them complementary. He wished his antitheticals Religion and Prud'homie happily joined in marriage. In the case of any projected alliance between ecclesiasticism and the freedom of Nature, the Italian freethinkers would most decidedly have 'forbidden the banns.'

HARRINGTON. I cannot find that Charron's more guarded interpretation of Nature as a synonym of morality and disinterested duty was generally received in France. As Michelet said of his country's rejection of Calvin, 'Elle ne voulait pas la Reforme morale.' Hence French philosophy after Charron, Descartes and Le Vayer adopted the Italian conception of Nature as inherently licentious, as well as implacably hostile to theology in its ecclesiastical form. But in this, as in other respects, France borrows from Italy. The standpoint of Helvetius and the Encyclopædists of the eighteenth century is precisely that of the Italian Physicists in the sixteenth.

MISS LEYCESTER. I don't think we need wonder that some daring spirits favoured a conception of Nature less restrained and civilized than Charron's, however noble the latter. They might have questioned whether the virtue of Prud'homie was so distinctly impressed on primitive races of humanity or on inferior animals as to make its recognition as a maxim of social duty imperative. Certainly both Montaigne and Charron delighted to contemplate Nature in her wildest aspects, before the birth of such virtues as Prud'homie.

ARUNDEL. You seem to me quite mistaken, Miss Leycester. No doubt Montaigne and Charron delighted to contemplate Nature in its wildest condition from a well-founded disgust

with many of the products of civilization. But a Nature absolutely devoid of elementary rules of morality never even suggested itself to them as a possibility. On the contrary, the two thinkers delighted to mark rudimentary stages of moral feelings and duties in the lower animals; Montaigne, especially, making them in that respect the superiors of man. As to Charron, his virtue of integrity is conceived by him as a categorical imperative—an universal postulate where reasoning beings are concerned. I think he would have said: 'Given the existence of two rational beings, and Prud'homie, as a law of mutual duty, is therein immediately implied.'

TREVOR. I however concur with Harrington. Charron's conception of Nature as a moral agency does not seem to have had much influence. His own power, as that of Montaigne's, must be sought in another direction. Both are leading names in an unbroken succession of free-thinkers. Montaigne we may take as the legislator, while Charron—as became his office—was the high priest of early French Skepticism, or if you will allow the doggerel we might say, 'As Moses to Aaron so was Montaigne to Charron.' To these two thinkers succeed Le Vayer, and other names of less note. What these early free-thinkers effected for French philosophy was in preparing the way for Descartes. The consequence being that when Descartes issued his proclamation of skepticism, in the *Discourse on Method*, he was only propounding that principle of individual autonomy in all matters of belief which was the root-thought both of Montaigne's *Essais* and Charron's *Sagesse*. These two writers, with their successors, also occupy in the history of French thought a somewhat similar position to Luther in Germany. They represent that phase of freedom and anti-sacerdotalism that were outcomes of the Renaissance in France as in Germany; but without the vehement religious feeling and dogmatism that characterized the movement in the latter country. Their co-operation in the common cause of religious liberty was none the less effective because it was rendered quietly and unconsciously. Instead of violently breaking up the ice of ecclesiastical dogma with hammers and iron bars as the German reformers did, they, together with Ramus, merely insinuated a few warm currents of free-thought, liberal

culture, rationalism and humanity beneath its surface, well knowing that if they succeeded in that, the ice would break up of its own accord. An indubitable advantage also pertained to Montaigne, Charron and others, from the fact of their not having broken off openly and finally from the Romish Church. They thereby ministered to the freedom of thought which, as we know, had already sprung up and assumed rather portentous dimensions, within that communion. They were purveyors of intellectual necessities to their beleaguered brethren, who had no wish, and but little opportunity, to buy of the enemy who was surrounding and threatening their holy city. Hundreds would read Montaigne's *Essais* or Charron's *Sagesse*, to whom a work of Luther or Calvin would be an accursed thing. While as to their effect on the later stages of the Renaissance, considered as the general progress in Europe of free-thought and modern science, these writers, and especially Montaigne, contributed by their breadth of view, their classical learning, their freedom from prejudice, their genuine love of liberty, to aid the movement to an extent not easy to overstate; not however that I myself share on this point the enthusiasm of a friend who once remarked to me, 'I believe that Montaigne's *Essais* has done more for European free-thought than any work of Luther's.'

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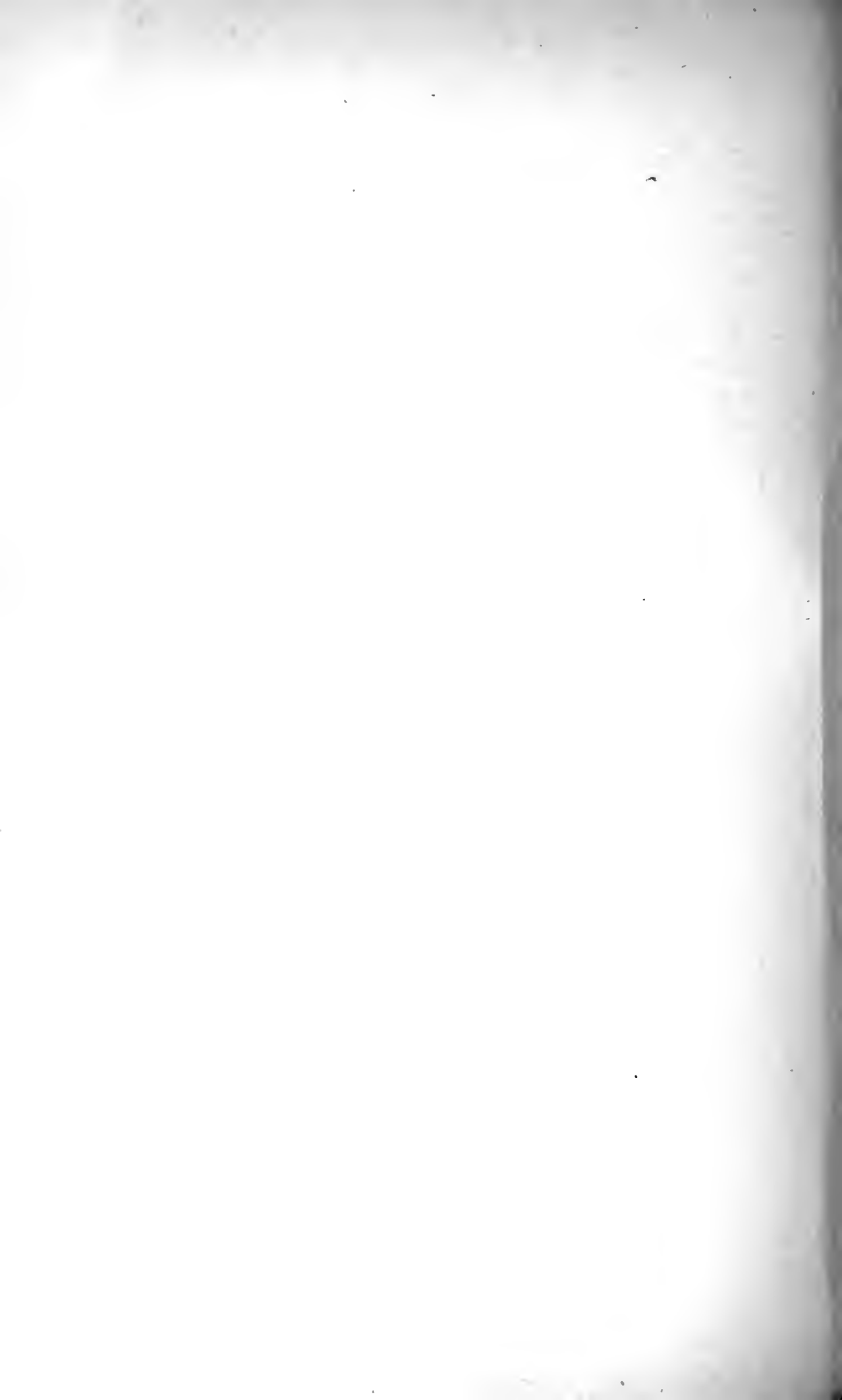
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SANCHEZ.

'La raison doit toujours être la maîtresse ; Dieu même le suit. L'Intelligence est préférable à la Foi : car la Foi passera, mais l'Intelligence subsistera éternellement.'—Malebranche, *Traité de Morale*.

*'Double oblivion on him lies
Whom all men know ; if to himself
A stranger and unknown, he dies.'*

—Translation of Seneca, *Thyestes*.

'Quo magis cogito, magis dubito.'
'O quantum est hominum qui etiam quæ nesciunt sciunt.'
'Quæ docentur non plus habent virium, quam ab eo, qui docetur, accipiunt.'—
—Favourite Maxims of Sanchez.

CHAPTER IV.

SANCHEZ.¹

MISS LEYCESTER. So we are to have before our tribunal to-night a member of your profession, Dr. Trevor.

TREVOR. Yes, and a man who does our profession much honour. In an age when the science of medicine was mixed up with astrology, alchemy, divination, charms, and an enormous farrago of superstitious nonsense, Sanchez held up to his brother physicians the torch of a true Science founded upon experiment, and a due recognition of natural laws.

HARRINGTON. Some of your mediæval doctors afford rather entertaining reading. I came across the other day a story of a Jewish *medicus*, who, previous to manipulating or administering his drugs, used to offer the prayer: 'God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob. Grant that these drugs may have the properties which I conceive them to have.'

ARUNDEL. If we can imagine such a prayer efficacious, it

¹ The following are the authorities on the subject of this chapter:—

Francés Sanchez opera medica. His juncti sunt Tractatus quidam Philosophici. Tolosæ, Lect., 1636.

Fr. Sanchez Tractatus Philosophici. Roterod. 1649, 12mo.

These Philosophical Tractates comprise:—

i. *Quod Nihil Scitur.*

ii. *De Divinatione per Somnum ad Aristotelem.*

iii. *In Librum Aristotelis Physiognomicôn Commentarius.*

iv. *De Longitudine et brevitate vitæ.* They are reproduced from the collected edition of his medical works (1636), of which they form the appendix.

The *Quod Nihil Scitur* is quoted from the more common Franckfort edition of 1618, which is generally bound up with *Maturini Simonii, De Literis Pereuntibus Libellus*. On this edition see Bayle, Art. 'Sanchez,' Note A.

In addition to the accounts of Sanchez in Brückner, Buhle, Tennemann, and, best of all, in Ritter, we have now the monograph of Dr. Gerkrath, *Franz Sanchez: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Philosophischen Bewegungen im Anfange der Neueren Zeit*, von Dr. L. Gerkrath, Wien, 1860, which is as exhaustive as the generality of German monographs, and much more clearly written.

would render the nature of the drug of comparatively small importance, and his own manipulation quite needless.

MISS LEYCESTER. I daresay the prayer was sincere; while, in the scientific conceptions of those days, it was certainly defensible. It was an age of easy transformations. The philosopher in his laboratory was endeavouring to transmute lead into gold. The priest at the altar believed that he had the power to transubstantiate, so that the accidents remained while the substance was changed. Why should not the physician in his study have endeavoured to accomplish a similar feat?¹

TREVOR. Very true, Miss Leycester; but the prayer of the Jew goes a little further than wishing to effect a kind of transubstantiation. Its peculiar impudence consists in its implied demand that the Almighty should acquiesce in his diagnosis, or at least in his judgment of the proper remedies to be used.

MRS. HARRINGTON. Dr. Sanchez is, I see, related to Raymond of Sebiende in the two points of having studied medicine, and being teacher or lecturer in the University of Toulouse.

TREVOR. Yes, but Sanchez remained true to his physic to the end of his life. As for his connexion with Toulouse, several of our skeptics share more or less that dangerous peculiarity; which, as we have seen, Vanini expiated in his own case by his barbarous martyrdom. Toulouse in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was hardly the nursing-mother of free-thought.

HARRINGTON. One notable fact about Sanchez is that he succeeds in reducing his philosophical principles to a more brief and compendious definition than any of his fellow-skeptics. A reduction of a mode of thought to a monosyllable is surely the *ne plus ultra* of epitomizing.

¹ To no dogma of the Romish Church was the healthy incredulity of ordinary common sense more vigorously applied than to Transubstantiation. Swift's well-known narrative of Lord Peter's assertion that dry crusts of bread were in reality slices of mutton, 'as good as any in Leadenhall Market,' is only a coarse caricature of similar stories current in the Renaissance. The Spanish bishop *e.g.* who deliberately 'transubstantiated' partridges into fish on a fast day (Poggio, *Facetiae*, ccxvi.), may be taken as a general type of these stories.

MISS LEYCESTER. What was that?

HARRINGTON. Merely the interrogation 'Quid?' or 'What?' Like the 'How do I know?' of Montaigne, it both disclaims knowledge and retorts the enquiry on the enquirer. If you can imagine a half disdainful half querulous What? appended to every dogma or definite statement, you will have a fair idea of the skeptical character.

TREVOR. You say that Sanchez's 'Quid?' is the shortest possible expression of skeptical suspense. I, however, know one still shorter—merely the note of interrogation (?), which a skeptical French doctor, a friend of mine, adopted as his crest.

HARRINGTON. But that had no articulate form.

TREVOR. No; when he wanted a skeptical reply to an oral statement, he supplied it with an expressive shrug of the shoulders. Unlike his countrymen in general, he was a man of exceedingly few words. To our English friends he was known by the *soubriquet* of M. Query. His interrogative crest was on everything he possessed, and imparted to everything the skeptical character of its owner. He defended its use in this way: He said it had been suggested by Rabelais' dying words ('Je vais chercher un Grande Peut-être') 'What Rabelais sought,' he used to exclaim, 'I have found—a great perchance. It is the only true title of existence, of the universe, of humanity, of myself. What are we? Where are we? How came we here? Whither are we bound? What answer can science or philosophy supply to these questions, except an eloquent blank? I, a philosopher, take that blank, so expressive, so true, and in an universe where everything may be questioned, I make it the mark of my knowledge, my belief, my possessions—of everything, in short. Take human beings, my fellow-creatures—what are they to me? Mere notes of interrogation—unknown quantities. I see them, I hear them talk, but as to knowing—bah! How can I tell what they are, what they think, what they know? Or, again, take literature, history, science, books and systems—whatever you like. I find nothing in them but invisible notes of interrogation. Take again my furniture, plate, or whatever I have. I sometimes see you smile, Monsieur Doctor Trayvor, when looking at my

crest on my supposed silver plate. But what can be more expressive? I buy silver, and it is possible there may be a good deal of true metal in it, but may there not also be some alloy? It is uncertain, and so my crest describes it. It is, you see, an eloquent crest, and the only true and universal mark appropriate to all things, for it asserts the true value of everything, which is — doubtful.'

MISS LEYCESTER. But may not the 'Quid' of Sanchez have had another signification, denoting the enquiring disposition of every truth-seeker, and symbolising his position with respect to every subject matter of investigation?

HARRINGTON. Very true; it may have done so; and in that case it would express the zetetic or searching attribute common to all skeptics. The purport in scholasticism of the enquiry, 'Quid?' was, we are told, to ascertain and define the essence of anything. It was hence esteemed the most profound in purport of all the Interrogatories of the schoolmen.

ARUNDEL. Your Monsieur Query, Doctor, must have been a humourist, as well as a skeptic; but his eccentric crest must surely have been sometimes of an uncomplimentary character, when it was affixed *e.g.* to his own prescriptions or legal documents. I may presume that it was quite useless to probe his belief by queries as to his own personal identity.

TREVOR. Oh, quite; he was invulnerable to all appeals of the kind. He discriminated between seeming and being—or between Phenomena and Noumena with all the subtlety of Sextus himself.

MRS. HARRINGTON. I should not have liked your French skeptic as a medical man, Doctor, especially in cases where promptness and decision were needful.

TREVOR. You would have been perfectly safe in his hands. His diagnosis was almost miraculous in its intuitive accuracy. His language was qualified by uncertainty: 'It seems to me that the disease is so and so,' or 'that such symptoms indicate such and such causes,' but I must say that he regarded his 'seemings' with as much faith as if they were infallible; which, judging by the result, they often were. Of course, in the prognosis of difficult cases, his doubting attitude always stood him in good stead.

HARRINGTON. I do not know how far Sanchez brought his skepticism into the region of his medical practice; but in his works on medicine he seems arbitrary and dogmatic enough; though no doubt in advance of the medical science of his day.

MISS LEYCESTER. Sanchez appears to have been a very youthful skeptic.

HARRINGTON. Yes, according to the best chronology that our imperfect knowledge of him will allow us to put together. His main treatise, *Nothing Known*, was written when he was only twenty-four years of age, though it was not published for seven years afterwards. As a rule, skepticism of a thorough-going kind is not a characteristic of youth; still there are notable exceptions. Bruno and Vanini, as well as Sanchez, were eager to throw off the shackles of authority at an early age.

ARUNDEL. What playful irony our skeptics employ in putting forth their lucubrations! Just as if the convictions of humanity were fit subjects for jesting. Take *e.g.* this title of Sanchez's book, *Of the noble and first Universal Knowledge that Nothing is known*. Instead of being struck by the fatuity of a science capable of being described in such terms, they proceed to comment on it as gravely as if it were the most important and indubitable of all things.

HARRINGTON. I don't think we must refuse to skeptics the liberty of extracting what they can in the way of sportive epigrams and facetiousness from their seemingly anomalous position. A science founded ostensibly upon ignorance cannot in the nature of things be otherwise than dreary; so it is but right that it should be enlivened by whatever amount of wit the subject is capable of. To say the truth they seem inclined to take every licence in that direction, whether conceded or not. Montaigne, especially, is never tired of dwelling on the humour of his paradoxical opinions, as *e.g.* in his remarks on Pyrrhon, who had, 'built so pleasant a science out of ignorance.'

TREVOR. The paradox of their position arises from their disclaiming what are regarded as universal possessions of mankind; but which they are not conscious of sharing. A beggar of a lively turn of mind might consider it a good joke if any one tried to persuade him that he was a wealthy man.

ARUNDEL. On the other hand, Doctor, if a man who was known to have means were to attire himself in rags and proclaim his utter destitution, he would be thought a fit subject for the charitable intervention of his friends—probably also of the law.

MISS LEYCESTER. But your self-proclaimed beggar is hardly an analogous case: material wealth is visible and tangible, and its existence is capable of being demonstrated to others. Intellectual wealth or poverty can only be truly estimated by its supposed possessor. One point relating to Sanchez we must deem matter of congratulation, viz., that living when he did, and teaching what he taught, he was permitted to die a natural death.

TREVOR. Very true; and especially as he happened to be living in the most bigoted and intolerant town in France. Toulouse has acquired a deservedly ill repute in the history of free-thought. It is the only town in France—

HARRINGTON. Excuse my interruption, Doctor, but you are really about to take the wind out of my sails; to prevent which *contretemps*, and also the loss of some valuable historical researches on my part, I will, with your leave, proceed to lay before you my paper:—

Francis Sanchez was born in Braga in Portugal not later than 1552.¹ His parents were of Jewish extraction. His father, Antonio, was a physician of considerable repute—a circumstance to which Francis frequently alludes in a tone of pardonable complacency. His parents emigrated from Portugal when he was very young, and settled in Bordeaux. The reason of this expatriation is uncertain, but there was about that time a considerable migration of Jews from Spain and Portugal, on account of their persecution by the Inquisition,² and it is possible that the elder Sanchez and his family were driven forth by that cause.

¹ On the year of his birth. Cf. Gerkrath's work, appendix, p. 143. Lord Bacon was born in 1562—ten or twelve years after Sanchez.

² The Inquisition was introduced into Portugal in 1541 (the first *Auto-da-fé* being held in Lisbon in October of that year); and continued its ravages into the eighteenth century. . . . Bordeaux was one of the towns in the south of France in which the Jewish fugitives from Portugal were allowed to settle by Henry II. Sanchez's family probably belonged to the 'Nouveaux Chre-

From his earliest years young Sanchez manifested an intense passion for Nature, and investigation into natural science.¹ His precocity in these and other subjects seems sufficiently shown by the fact that at the early age of twenty-four he was a Doctor, and Professor of Medicine. He himself tells us, as if it were a remarkable feature of his education, that he listened to his teachers without, for the time being, any feeling of doubt or mistrust, and was inclined to regard knowledge rather as the contents of a well-stored memory than as the product of the scholar's own thought and research.² With early manhood, however, his philosophical conversion took place.³ The native originality of his mind began to assert itself; and instead of continuing a dependant on the hoarded wealth of others, he determined to dig for himself in the mine of Nature, and to extract, in his own furnace, pure metal from the dross. Dr. Gerkrath points out that the neighbourhood of Bordeaux was at this time favourable to the growth of free-thought. It was the home of many expatriated families from Spain and Portugal, whose enforced submission to the Church was always regarded with distrust by the clergy; and many of whom, when opportunity offered, became Protestants.⁴ It was also the residence both of Montaigne and Charron, with either or both of whom it is quite possible that Sanchez might have been acquainted, though nothing certain is known on the point.⁵ That Montaigne could have exercised any great influence on Sanchez is impossible. Nor is the converse supposition much more likely. The men were dissimilar in nature and temperament; while their pursuits

tiens' or half-converted Jewish emigrants; from whom also the mother of Montaigne appears to have descended.

¹ 'A prima vita, Naturæ contemplationi addictus minutim omnia inquirebam.'—*Q. N. S.*, address to the reader, p. 5.

² 'Et quamvis initio avidus animus sciendi quocumque oblato cibo contentus esset utcumque post modicum tamen tempus indigestione prehensus revomere cœpit omnia.'—*Q. N. S.*, loc. cit. As a rule, however, Sanchez admits that intellectual indigestion is rare and difficult to produce. In a subsequent passage he says: "Jam difficile admodum est semel ebibitum errorem vomere."—*Q. N. S.*, p. 122.

³ 'Inde initium contemplationis faciens, quo magis cogito, magis dubito, nil perfecte complecti possum. Despero, persisto tamen.'—*Q. N. S.*, loc. cit. p. 6.

⁴ Compare on this point M. Malvezin's work *Michel de Montaigne, son origin, sa Famille*, p. 125.

⁵ 'It est difficile de supposer,' says Cousin, 'que l'ouvrage du célèbre professeur de Toulouse ne fût pas venu à la connaissance du traducteur de Raymond de Sebonde et que Montaigne ne l'ait pas lu dans l'intervalle de la première édition à la seconde des *Essais*.' He thinks it possible that Sanchez's *Quid* may have suggested Montaigne's 'Que sais-je'? *Hist. Gen. de la Philosophie*, p. 307, note.

and their respective modes of approaching philosophical questions are entirely different. And though the first edition of the *Essais* appeared in 1580, while Sanchez's *Nothing Known* was published in 1581, yet the latter, as we know, had lain by its author in MS. since 1576.¹ The main connection between the men consists in the skepticism common to both, though here, too, their courses are not quite parallel.

Sanchez has left us a narrative of the steps by which his dissatisfaction with the science and learning of the day culminated at last in pure skepticism;² but there is nothing in his own progress to distinguish it from the similar careers of others in our list. It reminds one most of Descartes' *Discourse on Method*, which we may possibly find an opportunity to consider. During the earlier part of his life, though when is unknown, Sanchez travelled in Italy and spent some time in Rome. To a mind like his, so ready to react upon surrounding influences, and withal so original and independent, such a journey was no doubt pregnant with important consequences. On his return from Italy, Sanchez settled for some time at Montpellier, then one of the foremost medical schools in Europe. Here he was appointed Professor of Medicine when, as I have said, he was only twenty-four years of age. He therefore filled the position, perhaps the chair, which Rabelais had occupied with so much *éclat* some fifty years before.³ But Sanchez did not remain here long. The civil wars which then agitated France compelled him to take refuge in Toulouse. Montpellier since 1561 had been in the hands of the Huguenots, and during Sanchez's sojourn there in 1577 the town was further developing those Genevan proclivities which finally led to the expulsion of the Roman Catholic bishop and similar measures of intolerance in 1594.⁴ These circumstances may account for Sanchez's removal, for in spite of his skepticism, he does not appear to have swerved, outwardly at least, from the older creed in which he had

¹ Comp. the Dedication. He compares it on account of this delay (seven years) to a seven months' child; and playfully apologises that had he delayed the publication two years longer, according to Horace's well-known prescription and the usual law of nature with reference to children, he must have destined it not to see the light, but to the fire, the MS. being so injured by worms.

² Compare the address 'Ad Lectorem,' prefixed to *Q. N. S.*

³ The Archives of the medical faculty of Montpellier show that Rabelais passed his examination as a Bachelor of Medicine, Sept. 16th, 1530; seven years after he received his degree of Doctor, and obtained great renown by his Lectures on Hippokrates, whom he read with his class in the original Greek.

⁴ On the state of Montpellier at this time see the interesting chapter in Mark Pattison's *Casaubon*, pp. 85-145. Comp. Moréri, *le Grand Dictionnaire* and Le Bas's *Dictionnaire Encyclopédique*, ad vocem.

been brought up.¹ Toulouse was, on the other hand, a very hot-bed of Catholic fanaticism. It was the only town in France in which the Inquisition had been able to take root. We have already considered in the case of Vanini the brutal intolerance of which this sacred citadel of mediæval orthodoxy and scholasticism was capable. Gerk-rath expresses natural surprise that Sanchez, with his well-known skeptical and anti-Aristotelian tendencies, should have lived there the remainder of his life without, so far as is known, any serious molestation; but there are expressions in his writings which show that he was sometimes in danger. He was probably a citizen of Toulouse when Vanini suffered his atrocious fate. He might have been within hearing of 'that most horrible shriek' which the poor wretch emitted when his tongue was being torn out.² It seems at least probable that a passage in which Sanchez inveighs bitterly against the practice of maintaining opinions, not with arguments, but 'with reproaches, blows, and even with murder,' may allude to that or other events of the same kind, but it is clear that he himself felt no especial vocation for martyrdom, and adopted what precautions he was able to avoid such a fate. So we find him speaking of the necessity of agreeing sometimes with fools for the sake of peace. He also declares that his resolution was to avoid controversy as much as possible, and to lead a quiet life; but the duties of his office occasionally prevented his carrying this determination into effect.

In addition to his own caution, other reasons have been assigned for Sanchez's immunity from persecution; the scientific nature of his lectures, his repeated disavowals of wishing to impose his own opinions upon others, and, a still more probable cause, his professional services to the citizens. But whatever they were, the causes must have been powerful which prevented the name of Sanchez from being added to the noble roll of the martyrs of philosophy.

The first contribution which Sanchez made to philosophy is significant. It consisted of objections to the *Demonstrations of Euclid*—which he submitted to the famous mathematician Clavius, but whose elucidations in reply did not, we are told, satisfy the young doubter. In the year 1577, the appearance of a comet had its usual effect in those days of spreading a paroxysm of terror through Europe. Like a genuine philosopher, and like his fellow skeptic Bayle a century later, Sanchez sought to calm the panic. For this purpose he wrote a poem, which he published the year following (1578), and of which I shall by-and-by have to speak, as it is of great importance in enabling us to estimate his position as a natural philosopher. It contains,

¹ One of his favourite maxims was, 'Time cultum Deorum mutare.'

² See preceding chapter on Vanini.

moreover, very distinct intimations of his skepticism. But his chief skeptical work is the Treatise we have already alluded to; which he wrote in 1576 and took courage to publish in 1581. This is, besides, the best known of Sanchez's works. In the remarks I am about to offer I shall frequently have occasion to refer to it. It is a clearly written and vivacious book; but rather discursive. Sanchez evidently does not intend it either as an inculcation of Pyrrhonism, or as his last word on the subject of skepticism; its purpose is rather that of Descartes in his *Discourse on Method*, or of Bacon in the first or 'destructive' part of his *Novum Organon*,—to make it the basis and stepping-stone to future and larger enquiries.¹ Like his great English contemporary, he projected an ideal science of Nature, in which words should give place to things, and *a priori* methods of enquiry to actual experiment and observation. How far he proceeded in his attempt seems uncertain. Gerkrath thinks that two treatises² which he mentions in his works, but which, so far as is known, were never published, were intended by him as instalments of this great enterprise. Of the remainder of his philosophical writings it is doubtful how far some of them were published during his lifetime.³ Besides the treatise *Nothing Known*, those which are best suited for our purpose, and whose authenticity may be considered unquestioned, are the work already alluded to on Comets, and a treatise on *Divination by Dreams*.⁴ These will suffice to give us a full and accurate idea of Sanchez's position, both as a skeptical iconoclast, the foe of Aristotle and Scholasticism, and also as a natural philosopher—a man of modern feelings and aspirations—a harbinger of the new dawn of science and culture of which we are happily privileged to behold the full daylight. It is perhaps in the latter character that Sanchez possesses the greatest interest. For among the group of skeptics

¹ Comp. Gerk., p. 16. In the dedication to Q. N. S. he says, 'Parturimus propediem nonnulla alia, quibus hoc prævium esse oportet.'

² *Examen Rerum* and *De Anima*. Gerkrath well remarks that had the former work been extant it would have been interesting to have compared it with Bacon's *Novum Organon*.

³ In *Librum Aristotelis Physiognomicon Commentarius; De Longitudine et Brevitate Vitæ*. The former seems a curious work in its bearing on the character of the times when it was written. Sanchez maintains that the knowledge of physiognomy was then imperatively necessary, inasmuch as men had degenerated into wild beasts, bears, wolves, foxes, etc., retaining only the semblance of humanity as a mask. Comp. Gerkrath, p. 20.

⁴ *De divinatione per somnum ad Aristotelem*. Gui Patin prefers this treatise to the *Quo nihil scitur*. He says, 'Son livret quod nihil scitur est fort beau. Son traite de Divinatione per insomnia vaut son pesant d'or.' He adds, 'Il a fait aussi un livre Espagnol de la Methode universelle des sciences qui est forte docte.'—*Patiniana*, p. 98.

contemporary, or nearly so, with himself, he is undoubtedly the greatest and most advanced thinker on Natural Science, and the best methods for its investigation. The contemporary of Bacon, with whom he has so many affinities, Sanchez is the direct precursor of Descartes.¹ With these two great leaders of European thought he shares the same skeptical distrust for the methods and acquirements of their forefathers—the same disdain for mere authority—the same aspirations for a trustworthy science—the same reverence for the teachings of Nature; and though last, not least, the same conception of the partial functions of skepticism as mainly a method, not as an object.

In our treatment of Sanchez the best plan will be to take the main subjects of his teaching under different heads, as the work *Nothing Known* is too unmethodical and discursive to permit our following it step by step. Of his direct skepticism we may take the following as his chief arguments:—

1. The weakness of the senses, as also of the mental faculties, whence he infers that demonstration, whether Aristotelian or otherwise, is impossible.

2. His Nominalism, or his protest against substituting words for things as objects of human knowledge.

3. Undue deference to the traditional methods and names, especially Aristotle, and the mediæval system of thought identified with his name.

The positive convictions of Sanchez, for as you will have guessed he is no Pyrrhonist, may be ranged under the two heads of (1) Nature; (2) Revelation.

1. That all our knowledge is derived from the senses is a fundamental point of Sanchez's philosophy, as of all the advanced thought of his age.² Beyond the sphere of their operation all things are involved in error, doubt and perplexity. At the same time the senses can only apprehend the external parts and aspects of the objects they investigate. They cannot attain to knowledge, which is a faculty of the mind. Hence we can just as little discover Nature's secrets by their sole aid as the fox in the fable could satisfy his hunger from the long-necked jar which the crane had provided for him. The senses only teach us the accidents of things—they give us no information as to their substance, and the accidents being the grossest and vilest parts of all things, the knowledge derived from them is

¹ This is also the opinion of Gerkrath, who says, speaking of contemporary thinkers, 'Franz Sanchez war unstreitig der wissenschaftlich bedeutendste, wenn auch nicht der bekannteste und einflussreichste unter jenen Männern.'—*Franz Sanchez*, p. 25.

² *Q. N.*, p. 76. 'Cognitio omnis à sensu trahitur,' etc.

proportionably inferior; it is also uncertain, for it depends on the condition of our senses, which vary according to their powers and capabilities as well as to our state of health. Indeed, this liability to perpetual change is a permanent and necessary characteristic of our lot—no man being precisely the same for an hour together—a fact which of itself renders anything like a final judgment unwarrantable. True knowledge is therefore so beset by difficulties at every stage that for humanity it may be pronounced impossible. Scaliger had reproached Vives for saying that the investigation of mind was full of obscurity. Sanchez avows that if Vives is absurd, he himself is much more so.

In his analysis of cognition, Sanchez anticipates our own Locke; the 'sensation' and 'reflection' of the latter being represented by the two-fold knowledge of the senses and the mind maintained by the former. These two modes of knowledge operate in different spheres; one is external, the other internal. Still we must beware of making too great a discrimination between them, for, after all, the act of knowing is one act—the man who knows is one, and the thing known is also one.¹ A similar approximation to Locke is also found in Sanchez's assertion of a third kind of knowledge, made up partly of sensuous perceptions and partly of intellectual processes.² When human research leaves the region of the senses there is an immediate plunge into darkness. Sanchez says he has *heard* of heavenly intelligences, but is unable to form any idea of them. For that matter, he can form no adequate representation of the atmosphere, though he can feel it, not such at least as would enable him to distinguish it from vacuum; so in grasping the notion of the Infinite, we can only 'conceive a certain bounded space, of which no extremity is properly terminated and perfect, but as if defective; because we have to bear in mind the idea, that actually it is neither terminated nor terminable, inasmuch as infinite parts may for ever be added to all its supposed limits.'³ In the midst of light,' proceeds Sanchez, 'we are blind. Often have I thought about light, but I have always abandoned the subject as not only unknown, but as wholly incomprehensible.'

What then is perfect knowledge? we may ask. 'It is,' answers our author, in language that reminds us of Ockam, 'the immediate,

¹ *Q. N. S.*, p. 81.

² Cf. Locke's *Essay*, Bk. II. chap. xii. 'Of mixed ideas.'

³ *Q. N. S.*, p. 83. Cf. Locke, *Essay*, ii. 13: 'The power of repeating or doubling any idea we have of any distance and adding it to the former as often as we will, without being ever able to come to any stop or stint, let us enlarge it as much as we will, is that which gives us the idea of Immensity.' Cf. J. S. Mill's *Exam. of Sir Wm. Hamilton's Philosophy*, p. 45.

intuitive apprehension by the mind of all the real qualities of an object, in the same way that we perceive its superficial qualities by our senses.¹ In other words, a kind of mystical divination—a knowledge only conceivable by methods which are out of all relation to our ordinary existence. Perhaps we must take this impossible ideal of perfect knowledge as an example of the craving so deeply impressed upon all systems of earnest thought, for a clearer and more direct cognition than our ordinary human faculties allow us to acquire; or, regarding the matter from another point of view, we may consider it as an expression of that distrust of the common methods and instruments of knowledge, which is the true *rationale* of all philosophic skepticism. The demand is that the intellect should be placed in immediate contact with the cognoscible object, without the intervention of any medium or agency of whatever sort.² To most thinkers the mere enunciation of such a demand is enough to expose its absurdity with reference, *i.e.*, to beings constituted and circumstanced as we are. Sanchez seems to have forgotten when he defined his perfect knowledge, that the only comparison by which he could express its chief peculiarity, *i.e.* its directness, was itself imperfect; for, according to him, sensuous perception, though direct, is by no means infallible. Hence an objector might have interposed the question—‘How do you know that direct knowledge is more trustworthy than that which is mediate, if your only example of the former is so unsatisfactory?’ or ‘How do you know that the intellect, placed in direct contact with knowable objects, will achieve greater certainty than the senses in a similar position?’ These and similar difficulties of his position Sanchez does not discuss. Possibly the definition was only intended by him to mark the climax of his distrust of ordinary modes and means of knowledge. No skeptic could, at any rate, be more explicit than he is on the inherent imperfection of all sense-deliverances. His chief example is the sense of vision. The excellence of this depends on the quality of the media through

¹ Suppose *e.g.* some higher order of beings, gifted with an immediate intuitive perception of the chemical constituents, both quantitatively and qualitatively, of any object submitted to it, in the same way that we are able to detect at a glance the difference between two straight lines placed in juxtaposition. This seems the *modus operandi* of Sanchez’s perfect cognition, though he wisely does not attempt to specify in detail ‘all the *real* qualities of an object.’

² With the advance of modern science, there is naturally an increased dependance on instruments of various kinds, and proportionably an increase in the number of agencies that intervene between the knowing subject and the object known. It is possible that a future Sextus Empirikus might object to much of our physical science, that it is too indirect, too dependant on mechanical aids, to be absolutely demonstrative.

which it exercises its functions. Air, water, glass, for instance, vary in quality, and in their power of transmitting accurate representations of objects seen through them. Colours are also uncertain, and they are not permanent qualities of the coloured objects, but are created by light,¹ and therefore they vary as light varies. Besides, the eye itself cannot be relied upon. Diversity in form and colour is probably accompanied by difference in power, and it is easily affected by diseases, etc. But the eye is the most perfect of all our senses; and if we dare not rely on our vision, there is nothing on which we can depend. No doubt some protection from individual error in respect of the senses may be found in repeated and diverse experiments, and in cautious mental judgment; but it must be remembered that experiments themselves are liable to error, being very difficult in their treatment as well as unsatisfactory in their results.²

The senses being thus imperfect, it must needs follow that all the other faculties and powers of man are also imperfect. The senses are apt to mislead the intellect, and the intellect in turn acts prejudicially on the senses.³ Originally, the mind itself is uncommitted to any opinion; it is a mere '*Tabula rasa*.' On its surface *most*⁴ objects may be depicted. Like Montaigne, he compares it to wax, which will take any shape or impression.

Sanchez repeatedly bemoans the wretched condition of humanity, compelled to draw its only knowledge from sources at once so inadequate and impure. He attributes it to the will of God; and quotes on the point the remarkable words of Koheleth, 'He hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.'⁵

2. Coming to our second point, Sanchez's Nominalism. In the battle against Scholasticism waged by the physical philosophers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in which he was a leading combatant, if there was one inscription better adapted than another to be the watchword of the attacking force—a legend to be inscribed on their banner—it was the three words, 'Things, not words'; or,

¹ P. 92: 'Colores non in rebus permanentes esse: sed a luce fieri, variari-que.' So Bacon: 'Facile colligitur quod color nil aliud sit quam modificatio imaginis lucis immissæ et receptæ.'

² 'Experimentum fallax ubique, difficileque est, quod etsi perfecte habeatur, solum quid extrinsece fiat, ostendit: naturas autem verum nullo modo.'—P. 125.

³ *Q. N. S.*, p. 85.

⁴ Not all, for two reasons. (1) The tablet may be imperfect or unfit. (2) Many objects are, from their very nature, incapable of being so depicted. Comp. *Q. N. S.*, p. 97.

⁵ *Ecclesiastes* iii. 11. Comp. *Q. N. S.*, p. 75.

as the idea is expressed in the motto of our Royal Society, 'Nullius in verba.' Sanchez, as well as Bacon and Descartes, was fully alive to the importance of this—the first principle of modern science. Indeed, his reaction against Scholasticism, as it is placed in the foreground of his treatise, may possibly have been the primary impulse which started him in the path of free-enquiry and skepticism. His work begins by criticising verbal definitions of well-known things. Take *e.g.* the old definition of man, as 'rational,' 'mortal,' etc. Sanchez, like Montaigne, points out that each of these explanatory terms only obscures, what in itself, and without any definition, is intelligible enough. So far from ensuring certainty, it only suggests doubt. Suppose the logician carries his analysis through all the categories; each single stage is but a new seed-bed of uncertainties. Even when he has attained the summit of Porphyry's tree, and takes his stand on the most inclusive of all abstractions, 'being' or 'substance,' he is not a whit nearer certainty; for who can explain what 'being' is? Hence every defining or explanatory term is a nest of contradictions and absurdities. 'If the various appellations assigned to a single object, such as man, all mean the same thing, they are superfluous; but if they mean different things, then the object is not the same'—a statement which, by itself, would almost permit the inference that Sanchez is prepared in his Nominalism to go the same length as Hobbes. The reason of the uncertainty of all logical terms and processes is the uncertainty naturally belonging to words—they possess neither stability, definiteness, nor precision. All the sciences relating to words, such as Grammar, Logic, Rhetoric, tend only to pervert knowledge. Words derive their meaning from common consent, than which no standard can be more fluctuating. Sanchez passes in review the various terms of Aristotle's Logic, and contends that they are mere empty verbiages. Instead of discussing Nature, and investigating existing causes, these philosophers are for ever feigning new ones, and he is esteemed the most learned who feigns the most both in number and obscurity. Against syllogistic reasoning our skeptic declaims with great vehemence and no little power.¹ He maintains that it has been positively hurtful to true science, because it has deceived men by a plausible semblance of knowledge; it has drawn their attention from things to words, from Nature to Logic. The pretended demonstration of the peripatetic philosophers is utterly fallacious. Perfect knowledge must, as we have seen, be direct and immediate, whereas the syllogism places a number of verbal propositions between the human mind and the certainty after

¹ Cf. Bacon's *Novum Organon*, i. 14. The similarities between Sanchez and Bacon are very striking, and are continually pointed out by Gerkrath.

which it is striving.¹ The strength of a chain is but the strength of its weakest link,² and a verbal concatenation, considering the uncertainty necessarily pertaining to all *words*, cannot but be weak. Truth can either be stated in a single proposition or not: if it can immediately and indubitably, all well and good; but if one proposition cannot define truth, how can a number of others of precisely the same nature succeed in doing so? As it is, the whole contents of Aristotle's works consist of definitions of words, and are therefore placed on a shifting basis. Sanchez, therefore, turns from the great dogmatist of Greek philosophy to the Pyrrhonians and skeptics, of whom he of course approves. He also commends Sokrates for his saying that he *knew* but one thing, viz., he knew nothing; but takes exception even to this amount of positive assertion, maintaining that he should not have said that he *knew* even nothing—whence we may see that occasionally Sanchez verges on complete Pyrrhonism. Besides, asks our philosopher, what community or essential connection exists between words and things?³ Names are attached to objects not as completely indicating their real nature, of which we are of course ignorant, but often by the merest haphazard or caprice, being suggested by some accidental or insignificant quality or circumstance.⁴ Sanchez refuses to universals any indubitable certainty; they can only be formed, he says, upon a complete enumeration of all particulars; the absence of this quality in any single case being enough to vitiate the generalization considered as perfect and all-inclusive. Thus the irrationality of one man is enough to falsify the assertion; 'all men are rational.'⁵ The same argument will of course apply to inductive reasoning, as an absolutely complete induction of every single instance in the universe is, from the nature of the case, impossible. He employs a converse argument to prove that we can have no perfect knowledge of any single particular, for such is the

¹ It seems not improbable that Sanchez had studied Ockam. At least, his standpoint on this and other subjects is identical with those of the great Nominalist.

² Cf. Herbert Spencer's maxim criticised so severely by J. S. Mill: 'That must be the most certain conclusion which involves the postulate the fewest times;' a principle which is clearly founded upon a skeptical estimate of the processes and instruments of human knowledge. H. Spencer, *Principles of Psychology*, ii. p. 435.

³ 'Quis enim rerum naturas novit, ut secundum eas nomina illis imponat? Aut quæ nominibus cum rebus est communitas?'—*Q. N. S.*, p. 56.

⁴ *Q. N. S.*, pp. 59, 60.

⁵ 'Ego contra contendo universale falsum omnino esse, nisi omnia quæ sub eo continentur ita ut sunt et amplectatur et affirmet. Quomodo enim verum esset, dicere omnem hominem rationalem, si plures aut solus unus irrationalis sit?'—*Q. N. S.*, p. 54.

intimate connection and intermingling of all existing things, that to know completely and in all its relations one thing, we must possess a perfect knowledge of all things,¹ and this being impossible, the usual conclusion follows. The remedy which Sanchez suggests for the endless and wordy debates of logicians is to abstain from definition; and he presents us with an interesting example of the utility of such a maxim; for having defined science as 'the perfect knowledge of a thing,' he immediately deprecates any further enquiry into his meaning, and refuses to add another word by way of illustration or explanation. Words and arguments serve only to obscure what in itself may be simple and easy. Hence it happens that uneducated people and children are often wiser than philosophers, for they are only acquainted with the obvious and common signification of a word. Logicians, for instance, have puzzled themselves about the meaning of the word 'Est,'² whereas a child has no doubt on the subject. Thus the human mind in its wanderings in search of truth is like Odysseus, waylaid by another Circe in the shape of Dialectics; or, like Æneas, it is forsaking its divinely imposed mission to dally with Queen Dido.³

3. Besides the wordiness of Scholasticism, Sanchez dislikes the assumption of authority underlying it. To the native freedom and independence of the intellect this was just as mischievous as the frivolities of the logicians; and it operated as injuriously in beguiling men away from the study of Nature. The greatest criminal in this respect was of course Aristotle, on whom, accordingly, his heaviest denunciations fall; but, for the most part, it is the baneful principle he contends against, not the men who may be taken to represent it. The '*ipse dixit*' of any man, no matter how eminent for genius or learning, is an arrogant and unwarrantable assumption. The proper study of mankind is not man, but Nature; and the book of Nature is open as freely to one man as another. Those who, pretending to study Nature, limit their attention to human opinions, act as foolishly as the dog in the fable, who threw away the substance to grasp at the shadow.⁴ Nature, moreover, has no limits; her domains are commensurate with infinity; but as long as human research continues to revolve round a few centre luminaries, human, and therefore fallible as itself, pursuing for ever their old orbits, and enjoying their wonted portion of doubly reflected and diluted light, anything like a knowledge of Nature, or progress in its investigation, is impossible. If the assumption of superior science, and thereby of

¹ 'Ergo omnia cognoscere oportet ad unius perfectam cognitionem, illud autem quis potest?'—*Q. N. S.*, p. 47.

² *Q. N. S.*, p. 56.

³ *Q. N. S.*, p. 120.

⁴ *Q. N. S.*, p. 112.

authority, is thus unjustified, those who accord it are even more blameworthy. Their obsequiousness is pronounced to be slavish and unworthy of true philosophers. They are like birds who are snared by the net they see spread to catch them. Their conduct is the less excusable, because they cannot help seeing the perplexity produced by the conflicting opinions and the wordy warfares with which the world is filled. Every authority claims infallibility on its own account, and it is clear truth cannot belong to all. Under these circumstances, what men have to do is to exercise each for himself his own faculty of reason, to refuse to bind himself to any human authority, to abandon the wordy lore of the school-men, and to investigate Nature by personal observation and experiment. As to the diversity of method, etc., which will result from adopting such a course, that in the search for truth is hardly a disadvantage; because a number of dogs hunt their prey much better than a single one.¹ Besides, Nature herself does not present us with only one unvarying aspect. She reflects in her numberless varieties, moods and mutations, the manifold powers of the human mind. While Sanchez thus vindicates for himself and his contemporaries the utmost latitude of speculation, he nevertheless thinks that there must be a certain amount of definite teaching, and so far, of authority, in the education of youth; for error once implanted in the mind, and left to grow, is only eradicated with considerable difficulty. Apparently he would have secular training to consist entirely of investigations into Nature and her laws; and the best teachers, he agrees with Montaigne, should be skeptics—those who know their own ignorance—for the same reason that the most trustworthy medical men are those who have themselves suffered the diseases they profess to heal.

Of Sanchez's pre-eminence as a natural philosopher, his poem on the Comet of 1677 is a convincing proof. In this interesting work, of which Dr. Gerkrath has given copious extracts, he sets himself to attack the enormous fabric of astrological superstition current in his time. Nearly a century later, his fellow skeptic Bayle unsheaths the sword of reason in the same holy cause. We are hardly able, perhaps, to realize the immense services which our skeptics thus conferred, because we cannot conceive the abject terror which the appearance of a comet then produced among all classes of society.² In many respects Sanchez's poem is superior to Bayle's *Pensées Diverses*, though the latter has the advantage of almost a century's further growth in enlightenment and scientific progress. Indeed, for compactness of method, keen incisiveness of argument, comprehensive

¹ *Q. N. S.*, Ad Lectorem, p. 9.

² On this subject cf. a note of Feuerbach, *Sämmtl. Werke*, v. p. 258.

views of Nature, philosophical insight into man's true place in creation—in a word, for the modern scientific spirit which we should expect to characterize such a work in our own days, Sanchez's poem is a very remarkable production. In lines which remind one, both as to style and argument, of Lucretius,¹ Sanchez points out how action and counter-action, growth and decay, have their respective provinces in the economy of Nature. Apparently antagonistic, they are really complementary of each other; both being equally 'necessary to its very existence. Hence Nature 'evolves peace out of war, and new life out of death. She remains immortal, nourished by the blood of the dying, and is vitally active, being allied to motion by an eternal compact.' He further states that individual calamities, even when actual, are only occasional and temporary aspects of large and universal laws. The intention of Nature is to secure the advantage and continuance of the universe, and when judging from our own isolated standpoint, we interpret it otherwise, it is only because we forget her eternal and universal character. This immensity of all natural operations, and insignificance of our human concerns, is a point on which Sanchez strongly insists. Applying this argument to the fear excited by the comet, he points out the pride and presumption involved in assuming that natural phenomena are intended as tokens and warnings for our guidance. Moreover, he insists on the absence of any demonstrable connexion between the alleged cause and its effects. There is nothing common, he urges, between disparates, and what possible affinity can exist *e.g.* between the death of a king and the appearance of a bearded star.² No doubt prognostication may sometimes be allowable, but then the causes must be natural, and within the limit of human observation. Thus we may prophecy the downfall of a kingdom on the death of a very able king, or we may foretell famine as a direct consequence of war.

A further objection, not only to the dread inspired by comets, but

¹ 'Sed fovet æternas inter contraria rixas
Opponitque aliis alia et sic suscitât ignes:
Nam pacem ex bello, vitamque ex funere ducit
Æternumque manet morientum sanguine pasta
Motui et æterno convivit fœdere nupta.'

—Cf. Gerkraft, p. 106.

Comp. similar sentiments of Lucretius, ed. Monro, ii. 77-79, iii. 964.

² Molière has utilized this argument in his *Amants magnifiques*, a work which contributed to give the *coup de grace* to astrological beliefs in France. 'Quel rapport, quel commerce, quelle correspondance peut-il y avoir entre nous et les globes éloignés de notre terre d'une distance si effroyable?' But this argument is as old as Cicero, who asks in his *De Divinatione*, 'What contagion can reach us from the planets, whose distance is almost infinite?'

to the whole fabric of astrological belief, Sanchez finds in the innate freedom of the human will, and the diversity of action which is the practical expression of that freedom. In this respect the lawlessness of the will is quite distinguished from the law-abiding character of all the operations of Nature. That the former, therefore, should be determined, or even greatly influenced, by the latter, is in the highest degree incongruous and improbable. Another consideration he finds in the well-known weakness and ignorance of mankind; for, granted that a comet does prognosticate, we are utterly unable to learn the nature of such prognostication; and though we were certain that it portended evil, we have no power of warding off or shielding ourselves from that evil. Every man's fate is unavoidable, and no amount of prescience on our part can avert it. What, then, he pertinently asks, is the use of forecasting the future, even if we had the power? What is the advantage of those vain astrological prophecies and divinations of Campanella and Cardan? A man's wisest course, he ultimately concludes, is to leave the future to care for itself, and to concern himself only about the present. Of course if these arguments were carried to their extreme issue, the prophecies of the Old Testament might not unfairly be brought within their scope, but Sanchez, both here and in his work on divination, expressly limits their operation to secular prediction.¹ In a similar spirit he opposes himself strongly to divination by dreams,² the physical origin of which he clearly points out. He agrees with Montaigne that he would rather determine his conduct by the cast of the dice than by such phantom oracles.

You will perceive that we have in Sanchez a thinker of an advanced kind, who is wonderfully free from superstitions which were then held by thinkers of far greater celebrity than himself. Dr. Gerkrath has pointed out that, in respect of astrology and cognate beliefs, the unknown physician of Toulouse is immeasurably the superior of our own Bacon. Indeed, his conceptions of Nature may almost be said to stand on the level of our own time. He recognizes her immensity, the eternal and immutable order of her operations, the beneficent aim and character of her methods, interpreted as parts of one harmonious whole; the subordinate position which, in most respects, man occupies in the scale of existence. In more than one particular he appears to me even superior to some of our leading scientists of the present day; for he does not think that the law and order of the universe render the supposition of a Creator unnecessary; on the contrary, the Kosmos is to him the visible manifestation of the Divine

¹ Cf. *Gerkrath*, p. 113 note.

² *De Divinatione per Somnum*, etc., *Tract. Phil.*, p. 230, etc., etc.

mind;¹ and though our reason inclines to the belief that the universe is eternal, our faith tells us, on the contrary, that it was created out of nothing. Sanchez dislikes that shyness of first causes, which it would seem marked much of the cosmogony of his own time, as it does also that of ours. Human reason, he thinks, cannot rest in purely secondary causes as if they were final. It must ascend to the first cause of all things, which is not the arbitrary will, but the wisdom of God.² Nature, as the expression of the Divine perfection, must needs be perfect itself. Hence all investigation into it is on that ground a sacred duty; experimental science becomes theology, for every discovery of Nature's secrets is but a further unveiling of the mind of the Creator.

And this leads me to the last point I have set down for consideration—Sanchez's religious opinions. Bayle, in his exuberant zeal for Pyrrhonism, pronounces Sanchez a Pyrrhonist; but in my judgment, in opposition to the balance of testimony.³ Not that there is no evidence to be adduced in support of such an opinion, for there is some considerable amount of a *prima facie* kind; but it seems to me rebutted by Sanchez's more deliberate utterances as to his belief. The title of his book we must set down as Pyrrhonian. His principle of pure interrogation also bears that character. There are moreover incidental remarks scattered here and there through his works which point in the same direction. But on the other hand, we have his own express declarations as to the sincerity of his belief in the main doctrines of Christianity; and, what is a still more cogent proof of his professed orthodoxy, and of his outward conformity to the usages of the Church, the fact that he was permitted to live unpersecuted in such a centre of bigotry as Toulouse. In my opinion Sanchez must be classed with Pomponazzi, as an upholder of Twofold Truth. Not that he openly avowed such a principle. In all probability he would even have deprecated its application to himself. But it presents us

¹ 'Qui ergo in quæstionibus omnibus causas solum naturales et secundas assignant et quærent, nec ultra progredi volunt, stulti sunt, et eo magis, quia id faciunt ne ignari vocentur si ad primam causam supranaturalemque confugiant. Hæc enim est sapientia summa, si demum omnia per intermedias causas ad primam usque et ultimam deducas.'—*De Long. et Brev. Vit.*, cap. x. Cf. Ritter, *Gesch.*, x. 242.

² But in his treatise *On the Length and Brevity of Life*—the most dogmatic of all his philosophical works—Sanchez makes the purely arbitrary will of God, unmodified by any considerations inherent or extraneous, the supreme law of the universe. See chaps. x. and xi. *Tract. Phil.*, pp. 359, 363. Comp. Ritter, x. 241.

³ This is also the opinion of Böhle, *Hist. de la Phil.*, ii. 802. Trans. by Jourdain.

with the readiest mode of reconciling incompatibilities in his intellectual formation. For with all his skepticism, his love for free-enquiry, his cordial hatred of the School-philosophy, his profound reverence for Nature and confidence in her teachings, Sanchez was undoubtedly possessed of a deep religious feeling. Revelation, in some form or degree, was to him absolute truth; though we hardly know enough of his secret convictions to pronounce on the extent to which he would have admitted its claims. Clearly there were phases of the dogmatic belief of his time which only excited his disgust. Hence, allowing for a preponderance on the side of Revelation, Sanchez was essentially a two-souled man. He pushes his argument on the immutable order of Nature's laws to an extent which would render belief in miracles, except as an arbitrary unconditional determination, impossible. Similarly prophecy is, on grounds of reason and Nature, denied all *locus standi*. He asserts the connexion of the physical organization with the mental faculties and the soul, in such terms as to imperil the immortality of the latter; and yet he not only assents to, but evidently believes strongly, these truths of Revelation. Apart from their bearing on his intellectual character, we have no business to analyse in a narrow or hostile spirit what must seem inconsistencies. There are perhaps some reasons for supposing that they indicate a coercion *ab extra*, which Sanchez was not brave enough to resist, a cynical deference which he says wise men must occasionally pay to fools. If he was the 'grande Pyrrhonien' which Bayle pronounces him, this would be the only possible explanation of his incongruities. But, as I have said, I do not myself share that opinion. I believe Sanchez to have been in most points of faith and practice a sincere Christian; and I regard those utterances on behalf of ecclesiastical orthodoxy as the outcome of a nature, which on its emotional and imaginative side was profoundly religious. In a word, we must take him as another specimen added to those already in our collection, of the philosophico-religious centaur—the freedom and the research of a philosopher grafted on the belief of a Christian.

On his intellectual side, Sanchez was above and beyond all things the explorer of Nature by direct personal investigation and experiment. Nature was the object of his philosophical adoration, as God was of his religious worship. At the outset of his career he expresses his determination to 'pursue Nature by the light of reason.'¹ To this resolution he adhered. He found in the contemplation of her varied aspects, and in experimenting on and determining her laws, the work most congenial to his own tastes. This he moreover re-

¹ 'Solam sequar ratione Naturam.'—*Q. N. S., Ad Lectorem*, p. 10.

commends every youth to take up and pursue to the end of his days.¹

His very conception of God seems in the last resort, to be taken from Nature, rather than from Revelation. God is primarily to him the omniscient cause of Nature, the '*Natura naturans*' of Scotus Erigena. He attributes to him perfection, not because Revelation assures us that God is perfect, but because such a conclusion is clearly indicated by the perfection of Nature. It may even be questioned whether he did not share to a great extent Bruno's pantheistic tendencies. As we saw in our Bruno discussion, the Italian idealist visited Toulouse in 1577,² and gave there some readings in philosophy; so that it is quite possible he may have had Sanchez for a pupil. The firmer grasp which the latter had of the principles of physical science, as we now understand them, would have made an entire agreement with Bruno's metaphysical conclusions quite impossible. To Sanchez, as to some other thinkers, the nearest material symbol of Divine energy is the sun, which he believes can create, *i.e.* actually form out of nothing, for no thinker in those days disbelieved the doctrine of spontaneous generation. Like a Greek Ionic philosopher, give him unlimited sunshine and moisture, and he will almost dispense with the instrumentality of a Creator. He considers the objection that the sun is the cause of corruption as well as of generation, but replies that both are parts of the same process, and one cannot exist without the other. He apparently extends the same optimism to moral as well as to physical evil, alleging, like Spinoza, that evil is only privation, and privation is in essence Nothing. This view however need not necessarily have clashed with the teaching of his Church, any more than the same belief did in the case of Aquinas and others; for here as elsewhere he might have employed the unconditional imperative of faith. From the point of view of his skepticism, Sanchez regards God as the alone possessor of perfect knowledge. His omniscience is the ideal contrast of our human ignorance, and His infinity the opposite pole of our partial and limited faculties.³ As God is thus an imperative deduction from Nature, so Nature on the other hand leads us to God. Like Raymund

¹ 'Juvenem ergo nostrum si aliquid scire velit, perpetuo studere expedit, legere ea quæ ab omnibus dicta sunt, conferre experimento cum rebus usque ad extremum vitæ terminum.'—*Q. N. S.*, p. 128. Though he follows up his recommendation by a very disheartening description, from the skeptic's point of view, of the miseries of a student's life, so as almost to render his suggestion ironical.

² See vol. i. p. 269. Comp. Berti, *Giordano Bruno*, p. 111.

³ Cf. Ritter, *Gesch.*, x. p. 240.

of Sabieude, Sanchez sees in her various laws and orders of being a kind of Jacob's ladder, by which a philosopher ascends step by step to God.¹ Whether a man thus attains the conception of Deity by the operation of reason on Nature or by faith in Revelation is of no consequence. He is perfectly free from the narrow-minded theology which insists on the recognition of Deity by methods and processes which she alone must prescribe.

But though Sanchez is occasionally optimistic in dealing with the problems of Nature and theology, nothing can well be more gloomy than the picture he draws of the skeptical enquirer, goaded by a restless yearning for knowledge, but thwarted in his desires and retarded at every step by obstacles he is utterly unable to surmount, attacked by diseases which incessant study and application bring in their train, conscious of his unhappy condition yet unable to forego the exhilarating but perilous opium-draught of knowledge, occupied in a ceaseless search for what he knows he can either not find at all or find in so impure a condition as to be probably worthless. Perhaps the gloomier shades of the picture were derived from his own experience, as well as from the undoubted danger which then attended free-enquiry. The scenes of intolerance to which his residence at Toulouse accustomed him, form an eloquent commentary on the dissuasive from enquiry, which we have in *Nothing Known*. It must be admitted that his practice does not accord with his preaching, for though he insists that ignorance is the highest bliss, the most exalted achievement of humanity, in his own case the nostrum is ineffectual; his dictum *Nothing Known* is belied by the whole course of his life, for he pursues knowledge as eagerly and persistently as if he were certain of attaining not only science, but omniscience.

To conclude—Sanchez must be regarded as one of the most keen-sighted and advanced thinkers of the seventeenth century. His position at Toulouse, the rarity of his works (there was only one edition of *Nothing Known* published in his lifetime),² the danger

¹ 'Præterea philosophus non uno ictu et saltu ad Deum confugit sed per naturales causas tanquam per gradus, ad eum tandem ascendet: ignarus contra, sine inferiorum causarum perquisitione, statim ad Deum convolat.'—*De Long. et Brev. Vit.*, cap. x. *Tract. Phil.*, p. 361, 2.

² The Lyons edition of 1581. Ritter seems inclined to doubt the existence of this edition, because taking the date usually assigned for the birth of Sanchez, 1562, he could then have only been nineteen years of age; and, as he truly observes, the work is by no means that of so young a man (*Gesch.*, x. 237 note). That the edition exists is now put beyond controversy; and placing the birth of Sanchez ten years earlier, removes some of the difficulty respecting his age when he wrote the book. Cf. Gerkrath, p. 143, and Bayle, *Dict.*, Art. 'Sanchez.'

then attendant upon free-enquiry, all combine to render both himself and his writings unknown except to students of philosophy. His skepticism, as we have seen, is a distinctive and fundamental principle of his intellect. He certainly coquetted with Pyrrhonism, but so also have other thinkers who cannot be accused of carrying it as far as possible to its ultimate negative conclusion. The radical opposition to the whole fabric of mediæval belief, which appeared to enlightened thinkers of that age not only justifiable but necessary imparted to their hostility a more uncompromising and violent aspect than perhaps they really intended. They proclaimed war to the knife, but found it expedient in actual conflict to remember the dictates of justice and mercy. Probably in no age or country are the settled convictions of men so debased and untrue as to merit thorough extirpation, supposing such a process feasible. Even when political revolutions are provoked by centuries of oppression and misrule, and when the passions of men are excited to an ungovernable degree of fury, it is found that a reform may easily assume too sweeping a character. Drastic remedies of this kind are as mischievous to the social well-being of humanity as to the individual. Hence a large deduction in respect of earnest positive belief must be made from Sanchez's somewhat loud professions of skepticism. Like the methodised skepticism of Descartes, it is merely the chosen instrument of his philosophical designs. He desired to lay by its aid the foundation of an enquiry like that afterwards prosecuted by Bacon and Descartes into every department of knowledge. He wished to free himself and all other thinkers from the thralldom of Scholasticism and mere arbitrary and unverified authority. Incidentally also he may have sought, by the abasement of the human faculties, to enhance the reasonable claims of Revelation. Whatever judgment we may now pass on the congruity of these different objects, we cannot withhold our meed of approbation from ideas and aspirations, which do honour to the man, and were calculated to meet the most pressing needs, both philosophical and religious, of his time.

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MISS LEYCESTER. If Sanchez had been the hero of a novel, instead of a well-authenticated historical character, your account of him would have been very imperfect.

HARRINGTON. Why?

MISS LEYCESTER. Because your *dénouement* would have been unnatural and inartistic; like that of weak novelists who mingle in their plot all kinds of combustible elements, and yet con-

trive, by a timid deference to popular feeling, to avoid a final explosion, and to make all end happily. Sanchez's life was placed among such perilous circumstances, that his escape from a violent death seems almost incongruous. We have all the materials of a tragedy without the looked-for final catastrophe. A Free-thinker, self-avowed; the author of a skeptical book; an inhabitant of Toulouse in the beginning of the seventeenth century; given these premisses, and the martyr's stake seems almost the inevitable conclusion. I hope he did not purchase his immunity by a compromise with ecclesiastical dogmatism unworthy of a true philosopher.

TREVOR. I agree with Harrington's paper. Sanchez would have made but an indifferent martyr; nevertheless, with such publications as his *Nothing Known*, and his other works, before us, we cannot question his moral courage. That work alone contains enough free aspiration, as well as direct statements of a questionable kind, to have consigned a dozen men to the murderous clutches of the fanatics of Toulouse. We must bear in mind, however, that towards the end of his life Sanchez resigned his professorial duties, and limited himself to the practice of medicine.

ARUNDEL. Does not Sanchez's freedom from persecution suggest a still closer similarity with Bacon? I don't mean as to intellectual tendency, or philosophical opinions, but as to moral character. Bacon, like Sanchez, could never have been a martyr. There is no principle of his philosophy he would not have surrendered rather than suffer the slightest inconvenience to maintain it. He would have suppressed the whole of his *Novum Organon* rather than give up, on its account, half of his courtly establishment of servants. I should regard both as examples of the relaxation of moral courage which skepticism has undoubtedly a tendency to produce. Take Sanchez's book for instance. If there really is 'Nothing Known', death, in defence of a dogma, or an assured conviction of any kind, is of course the climax of absurdity.

HARRINGTON. But not death in defence of Free-thought. Suspense and negation have their martyrs as well as assertion—witness Sokrates and Bruno. I cannot for a moment allow that Sanchez was devoid of courage; but he was a philosopher

of large and comprehensive views, which he apparently urged in proper time and place, with fitting caution and moderation. He was not a poetic and fiery enthusiast, like Giordano Bruno, who would have dared anything rather than repress a single conviction of his intellect or phantasy of his imagination ; nor, on the other hand, was he a philosophical libertine like so many other advanced thinkers of the Renaissance, who propounded startling theories and reckless assertions, as a mischievous boy throws about fire, merely to frighten timid people. Besides, Sanchez was fully persuaded of the fundamental truth of skepticism, *viz.* that in no province of a man's intellectual possessions, in no department of his energies, are his rights so undeniable and inalienable, so absolute and indefeasible, as in his *Thought*.

TREVOR. I observe that you have not told us much about the chronology of Sanchez's life. Incidentally it has some importance, as it shows us that when Vanini suffered martyrdom, Sanchez had already retired for some years from the chair of medicine which he held for the greater part of his life. I have been at some pains in arranging the main dates of his life in something like order. Assuming him to have been born in 1552, and it is self-evident that we cannot assign that event a later date, and that he lived, as his biographer Delassus assures us, over seventy years—say seventy-one years, this will bring us to 1623. Between these two dates the chief land-marks are his doctor's degree and professorship, at Montpellier, when he was twenty-four years old, and his removal to Toulouse shortly after, when he was probably twenty-five. We know that he taught as late as 1612, for there is extant a lecture delivered as part of his course for that year. This will give us, for his professorial duties at Toulouse thirty-five years, instead of the twenty-five mentioned by Bayle ; and adding the eleven years which are said to have elapsed between his retirement from his professorship and his death, will bring us to 1623, which I hold to be the true date of his death ; that given by Bayle and others, 1632, having probably originated in a misplacement of the last two figures. If this be so, Sanchez was an old man of sixty-seven when Vanini suffered in 1619 ; and had most likely long ceased to attract attention by

doubtful teaching. He was of course in the prime of life, and had just published his *Nothing Known*, when Bruno had to flee from the 'scholastic fury' of Toulouse;¹ but Sanchez was a very different man from Bruno.

MRS. HARRINGTON. What an obvious handle for a retort such a title as *Nothing Known* must have given.

HARRINGTON. So obvious, that it was actually adopted by an adversary, who, I presume, collected Sanchez's certainties, negative and positive together, and put them forth with the title of *Something Known* (*Quod aliquid scitur*).²

TREVOR. If the writer of that treatise culled all the dogmas which might be brought together from Sanchez's medical, as well as philosophical works, they would form a creed—scientific and religious—of very respectable dimensions.

ARUNDEL. Yes, with a *Quid?* placed at the end for an 'Amen'; like a grinning death's head introduced into a festival scene.

MRS. HARRINGTON. Perhaps he reserved his 'quid?' for his dogmatic foes, Aristotle and the Schoolmen for instance.

HARRINGTON. Not so, for it is a conspicuous pendant to his own *Nothing Known*. Sanchez is as cynically indifferent as Montaigne himself to the certainty or importance which might be attached to his opinions.³ If he had limited his symbol to Scholasticism, it would have been a 'Quidity' of even a more unsubstantial and questionable kind than its own famous abstraction of the same name. But although we may think his 'Quid' a fair subject for humorous remark, it was with him the quaint expression of a very profound conviction. He starts at least with the postulate that all things human are uncertain, however much he may afterwards modify it, from circumstances beyond his control.

MISS LEYCESTER. Of course Sanchez's poem on the comet

¹ See Essay on Giordano Bruno, ante vol. i. p. 270.

² Cf. Bayle, *Dict.*, Art. 'Sanchez.'

³ His words on this point are almost an echo of Montaigne. 'Quæ hic scribo, nec ego intelligo, nec tu lecta intellecta habebis, judicamus tamen forsan pulchre et vere dicta. Et ego talia existimo. Nil tamen uterque, scimus.'—*Q. N. S.*, p. 79, with which may be compared his maxim, 'Quæ docentur non plus habent virium, quam ab eo qui docetur, accipiunt.'

proves him to have been greatly in advance of his time ; but I confess to a feeling of sympathy with the older superstition. Remembering the dominant ideas of the time, as to astrology and kindred matters, one must feel that the popular terror on the subject was fully justified. But I should almost have thought that the galvanic shock which such a phenomenon must have imparted, was not devoid of stimulating and wholesome qualities, and therefore that the suppression of comets by modern science (I mean their reduction into regular order) is to be regretted. Monotony is the invariable accompaniment of unbroken regularity, or, as Abelard puts it, 'Identity is the mother of satiety,' and the laws of Nature are now regarded so much like the even motion of a well-oiled machine, that one almost tires of the unvarying round, and longs for some sudden catastrophe, or at least a supernatural omen to waken us up.

TREVOR. Had the galvanic shock you speak of operated as a stimulus to enquire into the causes of such a phenomenon, it might have been useful. As it was, it only drove people into the arms of religious superstition. In this country I find farmers have a notion that a 'comet year,' as being generally warm and dry, is always productive of a good harvest. In the Middle Ages a 'comet year' was invariably marked by an extra harvest for the Church.

HARRINGTON. Moreover, Florence, I do not think that the regularity of Nature is ever likely to cloy with those who regard it thoughtfully, simply because it is so thoroughly inexplicable. The order of Nature is just as mysterious in ultimate analysis as if it were the most eccentric and capricious of all dis-orders. Besides which, the regularity of Nature is arranged on such an unlimited scale, and there are in the working of her laws so many involutions and complexities—direct action, at least what seems so to us, existing in a kind of regulated confusion, with reaction, inter-action, and innumerable agencies of every degree of obliqueness—that her orderly freedom occasionally presents the aspect of wilfulness or licence, and her law assumes the appearance of pure caprice. Thus, to the sensitive mind, Nature is for ever new :

'Durch die Schöpfung floss da Lebensfülle,
Und was nie empfunden wird, empfand.'

So that we want neither comet, nor earthquake, nor any other unusual phenomenon to arrest our attention, and excite our wonder at the perpetual novelties and surprises of Nature.

MISS LEYCESTER. No doubt philosophers and thinkers can extract their intellectual condiment of awe and wonder from the larger aspects of Nature; but lesser folk regard for the most part only phenomena that are rare, isolated, and striking. To the popular mind a thunder-storm or a comet is far more wonderful than the rotation of the earth about its axis, or the courses of the planets round the sun.

MRS. HARRINGTON. As we seem drifting into generalities, I may as well propose that we close our evening's discussion, and have some tea.

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LA MOTHE-LE-VAYER.

'Men erect dogmas into Dagon—the idols of their ignorance and Philistinism—and like the Philistines of old, they occasionally find them prostrate and shattered at their feet.'

Anon.

*'Dubius sed non improbus viri
Incertus morior non perturbatus
Humanum est nescire et errare*

Deo confido

*Omnipotenti benevolentissimo
Eus entium miserere mei.'*

Epitaph of John Sheffield in Westminster Abbey.

'Si vis beatus esse cogita hoc primum contemnere et contemni; nondum es felix si te turba non deriserit.'

Motto of Orasius Tubero.

'Those who only learn and practise established rules in any science or art whatsoever, may be called the people; those who examine and reform those rules, divesting themselves of prejudice, are PHILOSOPHERS.'

Dr. Hey: *Heads of Theological Lectures.*

CHAPTER V.

LA MOTHE-LE-VAYER.

HARRINGTON. Our present subject, M. La Mothe-le-Vayer,¹ though not a planet of the first order, stands high in the second rank of French erratic philosophers. Perhaps, indeed, we ought to assign him a still higher position; for I observe that Lacroix (Bibliophile Jacob) in his summary of 17th century erudition gives him the foremost place among the prose writers and critics of that period. His estimate of La Mothe-le-Vayer so entirely justifies the particular and extended notice that we are about to bestow on him, that I had better quote it:—‘Un érudit universel, très sceptique, sans obstination, et sans préjugés: il écrit avec beaucoup de finesse et de malice, quoique d’une manière assez archaïque et incorrecte, une quantité de petits ouvrages de critique sur toutes espèces de sujets

¹ The chief works of and relating to Le Vayer are these:—

1. *Œuvres de François de la Mothe-le-Vayer*. 7 vols. Dresden 1756. This is the edition quoted in this chapter.

This collection however does not comprehend the following:—

2. *Dialogues par Oratius Tubero*. 2 vols, 12mo. Francfort 1716.

3. *Soliloques Sceptiques*, in the Petite Collection Elzevirienne of M. Isidore Liseux. A reprint of the Paris edition of 1670.

4. *Hexaméron Rustique*, in the same collection of M. Liseux, after the Paris edition of 1670.

Essai sur La Mothe-le-Vayer par L. Etienne. Rennes 1849.

Some idea of Le Vayer’s philosophy, instead of wading through the Dresden collection, may be gathered from an indifferent epitome by Alletz: *Philosophie de la Mothe-le-Vayer*. Paris 1783. 12mo.

Vigneule de Marville. *Mélanges*.

Tallemant des Reaux. *Mémoires*, passim.

Niceron, *Mémoires*. Vol. xix.

Gui Patin, *Lettres*. Ed. Reveillé-Parise.

Menagiana. 4 vols. passim. Ed. Paris 1729.

Of Dictionary authorities may be mentioned Moreri, Bayle *Dictionnaire des Sciences Philosophiques*, the *Dictionnaire Historique* of Chandon et Delandine.

ou il montre la variété et l'étendue de ses connaissances historiques et philosophiques.'

MRS. HARRINGTON. What a very long awkward sounding name! Is there no way of shortening it?

TREVOR. Yes, we can reduce it to its usual dimensions of Le Vayer; but it is a name, I may remark, from which if its meaning holds good we may hope for some enlightenment. For it means 'The Seer,' a term employed, as you know, for a prophet among the Jews. In fact, I know a friend of a satirical turn of mind who has prefixed as a motto to Le Vayer's collected works the words of Balaam, 'The man whose eyes are open hath said.' The family name was originally Le Voyer.

ARUNDEL. Le Vayer seems to have prided himself upon such an auspicious meaning, for he employs and transforms it in several different ways. The first book he wrote was under the pseudonym of Orasius Tubero, of which the former name is derived from the Greek word (*ὀράω*) to see, while Tubero is said to express La Mothe, being derived from Tuber, which means the same as the French '*motte*,' a clod or lump of earth. I should have thought that some allusion was intended to Q. Ælius Tubero, the friend of Cicero to whom Ænesidemus dedicated his work on Pyrrho's Skepticism, were it not that in subsequent works Le Vayer adopted another form of the pseudonym, calling himself Tubertus Ocella, which has the same signification.

HARRINGTON. Not altogether, Arundel. The adoption of the diminutive 'Ocella' as a cognomen might imply a modest distrust of the seer's vision—which adverse critics would say was amply justified.

MISS LEYCESTER. I suppose he ranks, in French Skepticism, next after Montaigne and Charron. If so his name represents accurately his position, if we pursue our former analogy from Jewish history; for to the legislator and high priest succeeds in due course the seer or prophet.

ARUNDEL. The name, with its implication, might easily seem of evil rather than of good omen, at least for its owner. The word Skepticism shows us how bodily sight engenders doubt; and the boast of Le Vayer, or the Seer, is suggestive of similar distrust in the reality or truth of his vision. I should

myself assign him another motto, which by the way is a favourite text of skeptics, 'But now ye say *we see*. Therefore your sin (*i.e.* imperfect vision) remaineth.'

MISS LEYCESTER. Leaving the name—is it not remarkable that of the six French thinkers we have on our list, no less than five should have been connected directly or indirectly with the court of 'the eldest son of the Church.' This cannot mean that courts are as a rule favourable to free-enquiry and independence of character, for that they confessedly are not.

TREVOR. The matter is I think easily explicable, and upon grounds flattering to skeptics. The court of France from the time of Montaigne to Bayle was undoubtedly orthodox, *i.e.* in the pernicious meaning of the term, which makes a supposed correct belief superior to and a substitute for morality. Still it affected to patronize learning, and took especial care that the tutors of Dauphins and other scions of royalty should be men of parts, which our skeptics undoubtedly were. But though they were thus connected with the court, they all forsook it at the first convenient opportunity, and with similar expressions of distaste and repugnance. As you have just remarked, a courtier's life is anything but favourable either to the cultivation or the promulgation of truth. Pascal said that 'Truth is useful to the hearer but disadvantageous to the speaker, for it makes him to be hated. Those who live with princes love better their own interests than that of their masters; hence they do not care to procure an advantage for him by injuring themselves.' The predilection of the French court was not for skeptics, *quâ* skeptics, but for learned and thinking men, in whom a modicum of incredulity is generally traceable. The same partiality was shared very largely, and perhaps with more sincerity, by the chief personages in the kingdom, both lay and cleric. Charron was patronized by the minister Jeannin, who declared that his *Sagesse* ought to be published at the expense and under the patronage of the government, as a kind of state manual (*livre d'état*). Richelieu was partial to Montaigne's *Essais*, and accepted the dedication of Mademoiselle de Gournay's edition. Le Vayer was tutor to the Duke of Anjou, the brother of Louis XIV.; Huet was sub-tutor to the Dauphin, the eldest son of the Grand

Monarque; while Gabriel Naudé was the protégée and librarian of Cardinal Mazarin.

ARUNDEL. You have forgotten Ramus, and his patronage by the court, and the Cardinal of Lorraine. . . . As regards Le Vayer, court life was especially unsuited for his calm, contemplative and unambitious temper. In his writings he frequently takes occasion to indemnify himself for the privations and disquietudes he had thereby endured. In one of his dialogues *e.g.* he remarks that if a man could preserve an equable mind and temper amidst the restlessness of a court and the distractions of a palace, he would give him leave to philosophize while propelled violently backwards and forwards in a swing.

MRS. HARRINGTON. I suppose as Le Vayer succeeds in order of time to Montaigne and Charron, that he was indebted for his unbelief and his knowledge to the *Essais* of the first and the *Sagesse* of the second.

ARUNDEL. Montaigne he hardly ever mentions, though he was a great friend of Mademoiselle de Gournay, the adopted daughter of the essayist. Charron seems to have been the authority, among his immediate predecessors, to whom he most deferred, and whom he quotes oftenest. But skepticism was then the fashionable philosophy. Those were days when Mersenne avowed that in Paris there were no less than fifty thousand Atheists, and that the skeptics were more dangerous than the Turks¹—an alarming assertion when the bare mention of Turkish invasion sent a thrill of horror through all the inhabitants of western Europe. Le Vayer and Gassendi were the leaders of a free-thinking school which counted among its members such men as Gabriel Naudé, Sorbière, Simon Foucher and Bernier. But it was not among contemporaries or his own countrymen that Le Vayer found his literary progenitor; so far as one man can claim such a title, we must assign it to Sextus Empeirikus, though he calls

¹ So Nicole writes (Lettre xlv.): 'Il faut donc que vous sachiez que la grande hérésie du monde n'est plus le lutheranisme ou le calvinisme, que c'est l'athéisme.' But it must be remembered that a very small amount of free-thought would suffice to frighten P. Mersenne on the one side and Nicole on the other.

Sokrates his *first* father, probably because he introduced him to the method which he found developed by Sextus. The first Greek edition of Empeirikus appeared just twelve years before he published his chief skeptical book, *The Dialogues of Orasius Tubero*, in 1633.

HARRINGTON. You surprise me, Arundel. I thought we had traced the influence of Sextus in earlier members of our skeptical confraternity—notably in the instances of Cornelius Agrippa and Montaigne.

ARUNDEL. No doubt. There was a Latin version of the *Hypotyposes* in existence in the thirteenth century.¹ Bayle says² that Gassendi contributed, in the first instance, to diffuse the knowledge of that work. After this time it became known, at least in literary circles, by Henry Stephen's Latin version published in 1562. What I have just noticed as bearing on Le Vayer's studies is the date of the first Greek edition (Princeps), which is 1621. Le Vayer, I may add, is a better linguist than either Montaigne or Charron. He could read Greek, though whether sufficiently to be independent of Latin helps may be considered doubtful.

TREVOR. There can be little doubt of the preponderating influence of Sextus on Le Vayer's philosophy, but his intellect was too capacious and his literary appetite too omnivorous to be satisfied with the single dish of any one teacher's mind, even though it were as ample and comprehensive as that of Montaigne or Sextus Empeirikus. Like each of those writers, his pages are studded with quotations from different authors. There is, as in the case of Montaigne, almost an affectation in the way in which trite and trivial scraps of classical lore are adduced as authorities for remarks just as much truisms as they are. Disraeli, you remember, in his *Curiosities of Literature*, notes him as an example of 'a great quoter.'³

¹ Le Clerc and Renan, *Histoire Littéraire de la France au Quatorzième Siècle*. i. p. 426.

² *Dict. Historique*, Art. 'Pyrrhon.'

³ Cf. Vigneule Marville, *Mélanges d'Histoire et de Littérature*: 'On a les ouvrages de Le Vayer en trois volumes in folio, qui ne sont qu'un amas de ce qu'il avoit trouvé de meilleur dans le cours de ses lectures'—ii. p. 328. Similarly Balzac said of him: 'Il vit en faisant le dégât dans les bons livres.' Cf. *Menagiana*, ii. p. 184.

MISS LEYCESTER. Well, Dr. Trevor, you must not forget the apology you offered in the case of Montaigne for this very fault. Classical revivalism was not as yet so old that it had ceased to be regarded as a wonderful and fascinating novelty.

HARRINGTON. Whatever Le Vayer's general acquaintance with classical literature, I should not consider his imitation of ancient models very successful, judging at least from *Orasius Tubero*, in which he professes to copy them. As philosophical dialogues they are greatly inferior to those of Cicero and Lucian, to say nothing of the masterpieces of Plato. It is true Voltaire praises them, as the first tolerable attempts to indite Dialogues in French prose, but that is not saying much. Le Vayer's style and method seem to me utterly unsuited to this species of literary composition. The language is no doubt plain enough. You are never at a loss for the author's meaning, but it needs plasticity, ease and lightness. You want it enlivened by something besides the perpetually recurring scraps of Seneca or Sextus—some native product of eloquence, pathos, sarcasm, or humour. His style seems to me tiresomely grave, sententious and prosaic, better adapted for a didactic treatise on some ponderous subject than for familiar essays and dialogues.

ARUNDEL. Compared with skeptical predecessors and contemporaries, Le Vayer's 'literary form' certainly does not show to advantage. Though not deficient in wit and sarcasm, it lacks the lightness and flexibility of Montaigne's *Essais*, the combined vigour and easy flow of Charron's *Sagesse*, and the simplicity and point of Descartes' *Discourse on Method*; but we must remember that Le Vayer was fully conscious of his unattractive style,¹ and affected to despise the graces of eloquence. Written language, according to him, was intended to express the writer's meaning and to persuade the reader; provided it fulfilled those functions, he was satisfied. Besides, to expect very striking qualities in Le Vayer would be to misapprehend his character. He is not an original genius, nor brilliant in any respect, though he is not so deficient in wit and caustic

¹ Cf. 'Au Lecteur,' prefixed to *Observations sur la Composition des Livres*, Œuv. Comp., ii. part 1.

humour as your language, estimating him from *Orasius Tubero*, would lead one to suppose. Quiet, grave, plodding, methodical—the impersonation of his own style and method—he is little more than a fair average representation of the industrious and thoughtful scholar.

MRS. HARRINGTON. We cannot in reason expect that all the stars to which we are directing our critical telescopes should be suns and centres of planetary systems. For my part, I think we ought to be thankful for an occasional ordinary human being to discuss, instead of an uninterrupted succession of intellects of the first order; who must be judged in ecstasies and superlatives, or else in a critical collapse of speechless notes of admiration. Occasional shade is as pleasant in literature as in a summer walk.

TREVOR. As the ostensible defender of skepticism in our little conclave—a sort of *Advocatus Diaboli* as some would call me—I must point out that Le Vayer presents a case in which free-thought and enquiry were the means of converting him from a wild and lax youth to a sober, thoughtful and philosophical manhood.

ARUNDEL. So far as the mere fact is concerned, no doubt you are right: Le Vayer is a philosophical convert. But we must not forget that beneath both his wild youth and his philosophic manhood there runs a continuous under-current of orthodox religious profession. He never threw off his belief in the dogmas of Papal Christianity. What we have termed his conversion was not therefore a change of creed as such, but of outward life and practice. Unhappily there was so little moral earnestness or purity in the Church, that it had lost all real power over thoughtful men like Charron and Le Vayer. Both were advocates of the secularization of morality, and its independence of religious sanctions. Both helped to establish by their works the ethics of *honnêtes hommes*,¹ the

¹ The peculiar or technical meaning of this phrase so often used by the French moralists of the seventeenth century is well known. It is explained by Lord Chesterfield in his *Letters to his Godson* (Lord Carnarvon's edition) as follows: 'Honnête homme en français n'est nullement an honest man en Anglais, mais c'est ce qui nous appelons a gentleman, c'est à dire un homme qui a de bonnes mœurs, de manières très polies, douces et nobles, et qui sait se conduire en toute compagnie, vis à vis d'un chacun' (p. 115).

half self-evolved, half classically suggested code of moral duty and practice to which all the independent thinkers of France adhered up to the time of the Revolution. Nothing can be a greater reproach to Papal Christianity in France, or a more indisputable proof that her mission was a virtual failure,¹ than that men found among skeptics and free-thinkers those moral restraints and motives which religion (and that, too, Christianity!) failed to afford.

TREVOR. Quite so! Driven from the Church, morality found refuge in the philosopher's study. . . . Of course in regretting the fact you are speaking from your clerical point of view, as you are justified in doing. But from a philosophical standpoint, I am not sure that the evil may not have been pregnant with good. It was one of those cases in which a misuse of power or privilege engenders a beneficial reaction, if not a complete reformation. Without the selling of indulgences we should have had no Luther; and without the depravity of the Church, we should not have had that recognition of the comparative purity of the heathen morals and literature which marks the Renaissance, nor should we have had that series of ethical writers in France which began with Montaigne. It would be no extreme nor untenable hypothesis which regarded Charron and Le Vayer, with some of their successors, as having effected that divorce of morality from Papal-religion, which Luther partially effected for a purer Christianity. We might therefore look upon them as Reformers—they certainly brought back men's minds to a more intimate relation with the precepts of Christ, than the lives and examples of the clergy, from the Pope downwards, were likely to do.

¹ *I.e.* as an ethical teacher: this is shown by the place which ethics claimed in the works of the foremost French writers during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. M. Nisard, in his *Histoire de la Littérature Française*, ascribes this to an innate taste of his countrymen for such studies. But this as the sole reason of the phenomenon seems questionable. As a part of philosophical speculation, there is just as much aptitude for ethical studies in Germany and England. The reason why no distinct set of moralist writers has ever appeared in these countries is that by the Protestant Reformation and its stress on Scripture, morality was distinctly allied with religion as an integral portion of it, which rendered its consideration as a distinct science needless.

HARRINGTON. Nevertheless, Doctor, we must bear in mind that the reaction, though temporarily healthful, was pushed to most mischievous extremes. The independent morality so nobly inculcated by Charron and Le Vayer did not, as a matter of fact, long preserve her independence. As ecclesiasticism had failed, some other standard of moral duty had to be found, and that not an abstract, unrelated entity, such as 'absolute morality,' but a clear and tangible principle suited to popular comprehension. The only remaining one was 'Human Nature,' whose assumed dictates were pushed to a barbarous excess by Rousseau, Helvetius and D'Holbach, and helped to bring about the complete moral disintegration exemplified in the Revolution.

ARUNDEL. Exactly so. That is why I maintain that absolute morality can never be a fitting foundation for popular duty, except when the ordinary standard of human thought and teaching on the subject has attained considerable elevation. Your observations quite justify the regret I expressed just now, and which Trevor thought uncalled for, that the Church had abrogated her own functions and duties as the prime moral regenerator of humanity. Hence instead of the Sermon on the Mount—which should have constituted the life and teaching of any institution which claimed the name of Christian—philosophers, and free-thinkers presently had recourse to Rochefoucauld's Maxims, a veritable satire on Christian ethics. . . . I do not yield to any one in the sincerity of my conviction both of the truth and utility of unconditional morality, and I think it useful that it should be sometimes considered on its own ground as pure absolute duty; but that fact does not lessen my regret, that Christianity, which was destined by its Founder to teach and religionize moral duty, should have come, by some monstrous perversion of legitimate evolution, to inculcate all kinds of depravity, lust, and selfishness. The enthusiasm with which Molière's *Tartuffe* was received, not to mention earlier and less known dramas, may be taken as the popular estimate of the morality of ecclesiastical devoteeism.

HARRINGTON. Le Vayer's *Virtue of the Heathen* is a considerable contribution to the cause of independent and non-

ecclesiastical morality. . . . It represents, I take it, a phase of a controversy which it would be impossible to revive in our time. Imagine a discussion now on the salvability of Aristotle or Plato! Happily the growth of toleration and large-hearted charity has been so marked in modern times that not even a clerical assembly could so far stultify and unchristianize itself, as to wish to exclude such a man as Sokrates from whatever measure of Divine love and knowledge that may be reserved in the Hereafter for all earnest searchers after truth. . . . By-and-by—after the growth of nineteen or twenty centuries—Christianity, I mean that of the churches, may approximate to the perfection of her primal existence, seeing that in Eden innocence and purity she first discoursed to humanity from the hill sides of Galilee.

ARUNDEL. To your prospects I heartily say Amen; only don't be sure that religious fanaticism and bigotry are already things of the past. It is hard to say what clerical assemblies, when alarmed or irritated, will not do. As to individuals, I don't suppose we should find many clerics, whose opinion was worth the breath which enounced, or the ink which indited it, who would now deliberately assert that the virtues of the heathens were vices; still, I fear sectarian Christianity has not yet outgrown its wonted exclusiveness. The distinction of covenanted and uncovenanted mercies, insisted on by theologians (as if the infinite love of God were a matter of chaffering and barter), still conveys a comfortable doctrine of superiority and separability, just as the implicit and explicit faith which Le Vayer reproduces from the Schoolmen, marks a similar wall of separation on its human side. . . . What an ironical commentary, by the way, is furnished by almost the whole history of the Christian Church on the texts:—'Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven,' and, 'In every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him.' . . . But we must not linger further on a subject which I shall have to treat in due course; so I will, with your permission, begin my paper.

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Le Vayer was born in Paris in 1588, of a family which came originally from Mans, and some of whose members held positions of dignity connected with the local administration of different places in France. His father was Conseiller to the King and deputy to the Procureur-General of the Parliament. He enjoyed considerable repute for his learning in the Civil and Canon Law, and for mathematical acquirements. He was also esteemed an excellent orator and a very fair poet. He died in 1625.

Of the youth of his only son Francis, the subject of our study, we are not told much. Indeed we know nothing of it beyond what he has chosen to divulge in a few incidental passages in his writings, and it is rare to find a man who wrote so much, say so little of himself. From his own confession¹ we know that it was the wild and licentious youth which was only too common among scions of the French nobility and learned professions in the beginning of the seventeenth century, and for which the corrupt state of religion and society was primarily liable. Of this period and its license there are still unseemly traces and survivals in more than one of Le Vayer's writings. I cannot, however, help thinking that in his sincere compunction for youthful indiscretions, he must have exaggerated their extent. Certainly, the amount of his reading in the classics, his acquaintance with modern languages and authors, not to mention the study of law which enabled him at the age of thirty-five to succeed his father in his responsible office, are quite irreconcilable with an utterly dissipated and wasted youth.²

What is very noteworthy, as Trevor just now remarked, in the case of Le Vayer, is his conversion from a disorderly and frivolous course of life, to one of moral austerity and severe philosophical application by means of certain free-thinkers whom he does not name. The passage is interesting for two reasons: (1) As supplying a striking contrast to the philosophical conversions of other skeptics on our list. (2) As a proof, all the more valuable from its undoubted genuineness, that earnest free-thought in the beginning of the seventeenth century afforded a *point d'appui* for serious-minded men, which neither the corrupt Romanism nor the narrow Protestantism of the period could furnish. 'As regards the pleasures' says Le Vayer, 'which accompany honour and riches, my complexion makes me capable of every one of them, and I possess natural inclinations, as powerful perhaps as those of any one, to impel me to their enjoyment. . . . I was thus in time past engaged in satisfying them, when my good genius made me acquainted with certain

¹ *Hexaméron Rustique* (ed. Lisieux), p. 76.

² *Comp. Œuv.*, i. p. 23.

persons of good sense (*personnes de bon esprit*) who imparted the earliest enlightenment to my mind, and revealed to it the first gleams of true philosophy. Their mode of life, altogether different to mine, their ideas and feelings opposed to those I had hitherto cultivated, together with the zeal, and the desire to search for and to cherish, the truth in all things, which I had always felt, produced from that time forward a very notable change in my mind.'¹ He goes on to enumerate the temptations he, like other converts, had to endure to return to his forsaken courses, and which he could only master by fleeing from them, and making a tour through the chief portions of Europe. His travels confirmed him in his newly adopted skepticism. Indeed, we shall find as we proceed that Le Vayer's is essentially the unbelief of the traveller. No one of all the skeptics has employed and elaborated so fully what might be called the geographical argument of their philosophy. He said that he regarded his travels as the period of all his life which was best employed. 'To the gods,' he adds, 'he owes life, but to philosophy,² right living.' It is thus clear that he does not include his deliberate choice of skepticism as among the uncertainties of his creed.

Le Vayer speaks in other places of the deliverance which he found in a freer mode of thought, with such gratitude and enthusiasm, as to compel the inference that his unrestrained youth had also been a time of sincere and earnest inquiry. The attitude of suspense would be a strange remedy, except perhaps on *homœopathic* principles, for mere frivolity and licentiousness; though we can easily conceive how philosophical research might, in duly constituted minds, awaken new desires and aims, and thereby totally change the current of an unwholesome existence. What suspense, I suppose, delivers from is the compulsion of dogma—the feeling that we *must* decide between two issues, either of which is unacceptable or unsustainable. In the following description of this deliverance, on the part of a skeptical neophyte, I cannot help thinking that Le Vayer is recording his own sensations: 'Thus, just as we see in natural things, the corruption of the one is the generation of the other. I have no sooner lost by your means' (addressing the philosopher who has converted him) 'that foolish belief in knowledge, than I find myself a thorough skeptic; and as one cloud drives away another whose room it occupies, so suspensive ignorance instantly replaces pedantic and dogmatic science. I shall therefore retire (from the colloquy) with that satisfaction, and mental transport, which you are aware is the property of those who have suddenly discovered a welcome and perfect repose of

¹ *Orasius Tubero*, i. pp. 230–231.² *Orasius Tubero*, i. p. 233.

mind.’¹ Not to dwell further on this turning-point in Le Vayer’s intellectual existence, we must acknowledge, from our former examination of Charron, that he possesses precisely those principles, and acts in exactly the way, which would have characterized a fervent disciple of that philosopher.

I have already said that Le Vayer succeeded to his father’s office on his death in 1625. But the dry technicalities of law had as little charm for him as they had for Charron. ‘I have always felt an aversion,’ he once said, ‘for the chicane and business of Themis.’ This natural dislike he contrived to minimize by frequent incursions into his favourite domain of general literature. Probably Montaigne’s *Essais*, Charron’s *Sagesse*, the works of Plutarch, Seneca, and Sextus, and other congenial authors, were never far removed from his office-desk, and in the society of these and kindred spirits among his personal friends he found a relief from the tedium and monotony of official duties. It is only in this way that we are able to account for the varied learning which is the most striking feature of his works. That he did not resign his office until his subsequent connexion with the court is clear from the Royal Privilege prefixed to his work on the *Instruction of the Dauphin*, published in 1640,² in which he is described by his official title. Other relaxations from professional drudgery Le Vayer found in travelling. In the suites of ambassadors to various countries and capitals he contrived to see the chief places worth seeing in Europe. Thereby he was enabled to add to the data, on national and race diversities, which he was continually accumulating, and on which his skeptical philosophy was based. In 1635 he travelled through Italy, and on another occasion he accompanied an embassy to Spain. Of the latter journey he relates the following anecdote.³ The ambassador De Bautrec and Le Vayer had gone to see the library of the Escorial. Thanking, subsequently, the Spanish minister for his good offices, De Bautrec humorously remarked, that in requital of the kindness which his Catholic majesty had conferred on him, he wished in return that all those who had the management of his finances conducted themselves as the monks of the Escorial did in the library of which he (the king) had made them guardians, because that, possessing so great a treasure, not one of them wished to employ it to his own purpose, nor in fact to take the slightest advantage of it. Most of these opportunities of foreign travel were offered to Le Vayer through the influence of Cardinal Richelieu; who became his patron and whose kind offices he requited

¹ *Orasius Tubero*, ii. p. 172.

² *Essai*, p. 5.

³ *Œuv.*, ii. pt. i. p. 375; *Comp. Menagiana*, iii. p. 50.

in the scholar's coin of dedications, most of his works being inscribed to him, while some of them were written at his suggestion, and in order to forward his political or other designs. Le Vayer, I may add, extended his travels to England; for in his treatise on Games he said that he had seen in London fencing matches, that the fencers were a good deal like Roman gladiators, and their combats gave much pleasure to the English.¹

Le Vayer's first important work was the *Dialogues of Orasius Tubero*, which was published, if we may believe M. Etienne, in 1633.² So far as his skepticism is concerned, this work may claim to rank as about the most important of his writings. M. Etienne, who has subjected it to a close and discriminating analysis,³ regards it as containing, in epitome, the whole of Le Vayer's works—as being the single theme, of which all his other productions are but so many variations.⁴ This remark must refer however only to his skeptical writings, which, extensive as they are, do not include the whole of his rather voluminous works: and even if the remark were more widely applicable than it is, it does not seem to deserve the reprobation with which M. Etienne⁵ notices it, for it was, at least in those days, by no means uncommon for a philosophical teacher to announce his main principles in one treatise, and to follow it up, in its ramifications and manifold applications, in a series of subsequent volumes.

Le Vayer's position as an erudite scholar, and a plain and sensible writer of French prose, was conceded in 1638, by the inscription of his name on the roll of the Academy, then in its infancy, having been founded three years before by Richelieu. Moreri says,⁶ and other writers have repeated, that he was among the first selected. This is not altogether correct, because he really obtained his seat on the death of another member (a M. de Meziriac), but it is so far true that his name was added to the list before the number forty was completed for the first time.⁷ This recognition of his literary merits

¹ *Œuv.*, iii. pt. 2, p. 51.

² See his elaborate proof of the earlier date. *Essai*, p. 5.

³ In this case Le Vayer was 45 years of age when he began to publish, not 'nearly fifty,' as his anonymous biographer remarks in the life prefixed to his works. The same writer adds, on the authority of Gui Patin, who received the anecdote from Huet, that Le Vayer delayed publishing by the advice of P're Sirmond, the uncle of P. Antoine Sirmond, and the author of the *Defence of Virtue*. That wise and learned man cautioned Le Vayer the first time he saw him 'ne vous pressés pas de rien donner au public.'—*Œuv.*, i. p. 29.

⁴ *Essai*, pp. 26-47.

⁵ *Essai*, p. 28.

⁶ Cf. *Dictionnaire Historique*, voc. 'Le Vayer.'

⁷ *Œuv.*, i. 32: cf. Etienne, p. 8.

Le Vayer no doubt owed to the great cardinal, who is said to have preferred him to Balzac. But Richelieu's critical powers were not equal to his political insight. Le Vayer was no doubt superior to Balzac in reading and erudition, but he was considerably his inferior in the rarer gifts of imagination, poetic culture, and the graces of a copious and varied as well as an eloquent and brilliant style. To Richelieu we must also ascribe the suggestion which led to Le Vayer's writing a system of instruction for the Dauphin. The book was published in 1640, and the cardinal was so well pleased with it that two years afterwards, when on his death bed, he is said to have strongly recommended Le Vayer for the post of tutor to the Dauphin. But when the time arrived to make the selection, the queen-mother passed him over on the pretext that he was a married man. Court jealousies and intrigues were probably at the bottom of the refusal. Mazarin had succeeded to Richelieu; and as the author of the *Life* prefixed to his works remarks, every great man likes to have his own creatures and favourites. There is no trace in Le Vayer's writings that this event caused him the least anxiety or disappointment. It does not appear that he took the trouble personally to solicit the post, for which however he probably knew that Richelieu, had he lived so long, destined him. We must hope that the marriage which thus deprived him for the time of high court preferment may have had other compensations for our philosopher. His wife was a British lady. She was the daughter of one Scotchman, who had been Conseillier at Poitiers, and the widow of another. Le Vayer had a son born to him in 1629 or 30, who afterwards became an abbé, and a distinguished name among the *Littérateurs* of the time. His premature death at the age of thirty-five, was the greatest calamity which disturbed the even serenity of Le Vayer's life.

In 1647 Le Vayer was appointed by Cardinal Mazarin to the office of tutor to the young Duke of Anjou, the king's brother; whence it is inferred that between 1644 and that date his wife must have died. The success of Le Vayer with his young pupil was so marked that in 1652 the queen-mother confided to his care the completion of the king's education. In this capacity he became for some years a courtier, attending his pupil in different royal progresses from one town to another. He was with him at Rheims, at his coronation, and continued in his post until the king's marriage in 1660. But though our philosopher had thus achieved a position of great distinction, these were far from being the happiest years of his life. The jealousies, intrigues and contentions of court life were utterly unsuited to his calm meditative temper. For its licence, frivolity and fashion, he entertained a stoical contempt. Among other 'modes'

which disgusted Le Vayer was that of long pointed shoes. 'I am offended,' he remarks, 'at that rounded shoe, made like an extinguisher, and whose roundness it is so difficult to preserve. . . . In truth I believe that it is the invention of some unfortunate individual who, being unable to walk straight, pretends that he adopts this gait in order to take care of the shape of his shoes, and that mysterious rotundity.'¹ . . . He speaks of the preposterous absurdity of fashion in terms which a growth of two centuries in wisdom and civilization has not yet made unnecessary. 'To introduce fashions which torture our members and attempt to correct Nature's own proportions in the structure of the human body, is what we cannot too forcibly reject, nor too strongly condemn.' No doubt a wise sentiment, becoming a philosopher, but tending to show Le Vayer's radical unfitness for enacting the part of a courtier. He was nearly as much out of place at the court of Louis XIV. as Diogenes would have been in that of Alexander the Great. Its elaborate ceremony and stately formality were insufferably tedious to a man in whom, assuming the truth of metempsychosis, the soul of Seneca had again been born. By means of his retiring habits, his persistent devotion to study, and his determined refusal to intermingle more than was absolutely necessary in affairs and pleasures so uncongenial and hazardous, he managed to steer safely among the winds, rocks and quicksands of court life. He says of himself, that he had adopted an almost Pythagorean silence, and that while his eyes and ears exercised their accustomed functions, his tongue would have brought him to trouble had it not adopted that taste for a convenient taciturnity which he had prescribed to it.² The consequence of his judicious conduct was, that when he retired in 1600, it was with the cordial respect of the king and all the functionaries of court and state with whom his office had brought him into contact. Elated with his own escape, Le Vayer frequently takes occasion to allude in a humorous tone to the temptations and dangers of a courtier life, and regards the man who has passed through them in safety in the light of a mariner who, after traversing dangerous seas and encountering violent tempests, contrives to escape shipwreck: *e.g.* in one of his works on Etymology, apropos of favourable winds which pretended sorcerers used to sell in

¹ 'Apropos des bottes' we may remark, that Le Vayer, notwithstanding court pressure, always maintained a proper and philosophical independence as to the shape, colour, and material of his boots, as he did of his ordinary apparel. Tallemant des Reaux says: 'All the world now wear shoes, even half-boots are out of fashion. It is only La Mothe-le-Vayer, preceptor of the Duke of Anjou, who wears sometimes boots, sometimes half-boots, but he never was like other people.'—*Memoires*, Brussels edition, ii. p. 24.

² See Lettre lxvi., *Eur. Comp.*, vi. pt. 2, pp. 141-143. *Comp.* pp. 99-100.

Norway, he says, 'It is just the same at court,' and he adds '*aula* (the Latin word for court) is a great hall or vestibule—the court of a prince. The word comes from the Greek *aulée* a wind instrument, the flute,' playfully intimating that 'the court is so called because to steer well his bark in it, the pilot ought to know the different winds perfectly.' We must of course not suppose that Le Vayer had no enemies. This would have been impossible and anomalous for a man in his elevated position. Indeed his own character and that of his writings afforded ample scope for courtly ill-nature and calumny. Besides the *Dialogues of Orasius Tubero*, published in 1633, a work ranking next to Montaigne's *Essais* and Charron's *Sagesse*, as the most noteworthy outcome of French skepticism prior to Descartes—his son had issued more than one edition of his collected works in which the principles of Orasius Tubero were largely amplified and applied to most provinces of human knowledge. Nothing was easier or more natural for an envious courtier than to fling the charges of skepticism and Atheism¹ against such a writer, and whatever might be Le Vayer's anxiety to disclaim the latter imputation, he was not averse to considering the former as a fair and not unwelcome designation. It is related of him that he once overheard a detractor remark, 'There goes a man without a religion,' Le Vayer immediately turned on the speaker and replied: 'My friend, I possess so much religion as to have none of yours,'² or as a different version puts it, 'My friend, I have so much religion as to pardon you, instead of procuring, as I might, your punishment.'³ But his own modesty, his

¹ Cf. Gui Patin, writing on July 13th, 1649, soon after Le Vayer's court appointment. 'M. de la Mothe-le-Vayer has lately been called to court, and made preceptor to the Duke of Anjou, brother of the king. He is about sixty years of age, of medium height, as much a Stoic as a man of the world, he wishes to be praised, but never praises any one, he is eccentric and capricious and suspected of the mental vice with which Diagoras and Protagoras were touched.'—*Lettres*, ed. Reveillé-Parise, ii. p. 523. Comp. i. p. 460. On the latter phrase Patin's editor remarks: 'This accusation of Atheism has long weighed on the fame of La Mothe-le-Vayer but without proof. . . . At that time, it needed but a small matter to make an Atheist. The great Descartes himself was regarded as such, he who has given so fair a demonstration both of God and of the soul.' Bayle (art. 'Vayer'), says, 'There is a good deal of freedom in the *Dialogues of Orasius Tubero*, but he who should thence conclude that the author has no religion, would be guilty of rash judgment, for there is a great difference between writing freely what may be said against the faith, and believing it firmly.' Gui Patin's own creed was, as Bayle remarked, 'not overcharged with articles.'

² Nisard, *Histoire de la Littérature Française*, iv. p. 42, note. Cf. Etienne, p. 17.

³ Art. 'La Mothe-le-Vayer,' in *Nouvelle Biographie Générale*.

unassuming and retiring manners, nay the self-distrust which I am bound to say in his case appears to have been the result of his skeptical disposition, delivered him from snares and enmities which might have caused great trouble to a man of another temper. As it was, he could make a similar boast to that of Ramus, when he declared that his enforced servitude had never enslaved his mind. 'The court which compels me to a certain external constraint will never unsettle in the slightest degree my mind as to things of importance.' Indeed, the agitations and trivialities of such a mode of life had confirmed his attachment¹ to philosophy and made him despise and shrink from high social position. He compares himself to the Alpine plant, *Christophoriana*,² which tries to make itself less conspicuous the higher its locality. A considerable number of Le Vayer's writings are connected with his court life, being treatises which he wrote for his pupils on every one of the sciences then recognised. While these productions cannot be said to possess any very brilliant qualities of style, they are clear and perspicuous. They serve to show Le Vayer's immense erudition, as well as his possession of the art of imparting information in a lively and interesting manner; while the fact of his accumulating materials and carefully inditing so many works for the sole purpose of instructing his charges proves that he considered no labour too great in such a cause.

After the termination of his court duties Le Vayer seems to have retired for the remainder of his life into the learned privacy of his study. Here, in communion with the sages and skeptics of all ages, he led the tranquil meditative existence which was so grateful to him. Gabriel Naudé thus describes the effect of his literary environment on his opinions. 'In the midst of his well-furnished library he sees himself surrounded by books, written in different ages and in various languages, of which one says "white," another "black." Struck by finding this multiplicity, this contradiction of opinions upon all the subjects which the Deity has left to human discussion, he arrives at the conclusion that skepticism is of all philosophies the most sensible.³ Happy those who, like him, falter only on the paths of history and of physics. An enlightened doubt may frequently serve as a torch for human guidance.' But Le Vayer's philosophy was probably the

¹ *Œur.*, vi. 2, p. 142.

² The *Actea spiculata*, our Herb Christopher.

³ Naudé, 'Dialogue de Mascarat,' quoted, *Œur.*, i. p. 47. It may be worth notice that the reflection which Le Vayer himself makes on the multiplicity of books in a library, is their tendency to produce a distaste for any literary undertaking, which has been already treated. On which points he commends Seneca's dictum, that our predecessors have opened the way for us, not closed it. *Observations sur la composition des Livres*, ii. p. 1, p. 376.

cause rather than the effect of his continual accumulation of books in every department of literature. This placid, studious life was not free from misfortune. In 1664 he lost his only son, the Abbé, who had long been the pride and ornament of his father's life. As I have already hinted, he was a man of considerable ability and large literary attainments. Le Vayer's grief was all the more poignant, because the misfortune might conceivably have been prevented. It was attributed with some likelihood to injudicious medical treatment. Gui Patin, writing at the time, thus describes the occurrence:—'We have here a good man in great trouble. I mean M. La Mothe-le-Vayer, a celebrated writer, and formerly preceptor of M. the Duke of Orleans. He had an only son, about thirty-five years of age, who fell ill of a fever, and to whom MM. Esprit, Brayer and Bodineau administered on three occasions antimonial wine, and despatched him to the country whence no one returns.'¹ But in these remarks we must take into account Gui Patin's usual superabundant candour in criticising his friends as well as his dislike to the use of antimonial wine—a dislike, I may add, which, while justified by its indiscriminate use at that time,² must not be taken to imply a dread on his part of depletory measures in general. The Abbé had been the personal friend both of Boileau and Molière. The former dedicated to him his fourth Satire, commencing:—

'D'où vient, cher Le Vayer, que l'homme le moins sage
Croit toujours seul avoir la sagesse en partage?'

Molière, besides sending to the bereaved father a letter and a sonnet which do equal credit to his heart and head,³ avenged the supposed cause of his friend's death by caricaturing the court physicians in *L'Amour Médecin*.⁴ M. Etienne remarks that this untoward event, which shattered the hopes of Le Vayer's life, also destroyed his faith

¹ Gui Patin, *Lettres* (ed. Reveillé-Parise), iii. p. 484. Cf. Etienne, *Essai*, p. 58, and note.

² Thus Boileau instances as a greater difficulty than reckoning up the various perversities of mankind, that a man had better count up the victims of Guenand (the queen's physician) and antimony:—

'Il compteroit plutôt combien dans un printemps
Guenand et l'antimoine ont fait mourir de gens.'

Guenand is the Macroton of Molière's *L'Amour Médecin*.

³ Cf. Moland, *Œuvres de Molière*, vol. vii.

⁴ Gui Patin says that the masks worn by the representatives of the court physicians in the performance of this drama, were made for the purpose of their easy identification, but this seems needless; the men intended were sufficiently identified by their gait, gestures, and mode of speech. Cf. Moland, notice préliminaire to *L'Amour Médecin*. Molière, *Œuv. Comp.*, iii. p. 516.

in medical knowledge; and that his chief works after this date are characterized by more strongly marked incredulity as to the science and its methods.

No doubt the death of his son under such circumstances could hardly have generated an increased sense of medical infallibility; but I cannot agree with M. Etienne, either that medical science is generally exempted from the analytical processes and doubts of skeptics, or that there is such a marked difference between Le Vayer's estimate of the science before and after the melancholy event. Indeed, the converse of the former proposition seems to me truer. Sextus Empiricus¹ frequently remarks on the uncertainty of the medical art, *e.g.* of particular diseases being driven out rather than healed by inducing others, of the difficulty of discriminating between the cures of ignorance (*i.e.* Nature), and those of science, etc., while Montaigne,² Rabelais, Cornelius Agrippa, Hirnhaym, not to mention other names, continually insist on its empiricism, and uncertain results. [I would have added your own name, Doctor! only that I happen to know that your skeptical speculation ends where your medical practice begins]. Le Vayer, like other philosophers in similar circumstances, found a consolation in study. One of his works, called *Le Prose Chagrin*,³ seems to have been written as a kind of exercise or mental tonic, to brace himself up after the severity of the blow. It may be described as a three-parts stoical and one-part Christian treatise on the disappointments of life. Like most of Le Vayer's works, it is not distinguished by compactness either of form or matter. It is a collection of desultory remarks arraiguing the natural laws, the inevitable ills, imperfections and trials, which pertain to existence. As usual, skepticism comes in for its eulogy; and so far as Le Vayer is concerned, his belief in its principles is rather confirmed than weakened by his affliction and the reflections suggested by it. He had always maintained Ataraxia to be the highest aim of the thinker. He is now also convinced that its emotional ally, Metriopatheaia (equanimity), is the *summum bonum* of the afflicted or sentimentalist. Among the dogmatisms inculcated is that of medicine, and he has

¹ *Adv. Math.* i. 45, xi. 188, 201, 201.

² Cf. Montaigne's ridicule of doctors. Gui Patin remarks: 'Michel de Montaigne was too much in a hurry; had he attained ninety-six or a hundred years before laughing at the art of medicine, he would have had some colour of reason; but having become sickly at an early age, and not living more than seventy years (he should have said fifty-nine), it must be said that he had to pay too soon for his mockery. Wise travellers do not irritate the village dogs until they have left them a long way behind, and are in no further danger of being bitten.'—*Lettres*, i. 362.

³ *Œuv.* iii. pt. 1, p. 239.

a few satirical remarks on excessive blood-letting. Though he professes at the outset of his treatise to look for consolation to faith rather than reason, this seems no more than the external deference he generally accords to religion; as I have hinted, the conclusions of the treatise are those of a stoic and skeptic philosopher.

The remainder of Le Vayer's life is, with one exception, almost devoid of incident. In the retirement of his study, or in the select society of a few chosen friends, he glided down the declivity of life with as little jolting or disturbance as falls to the lot of most men. His studious ardour was not cooled by the frosts of old age. Up to his last illness he continued his much loved pursuits; reading his favourite authors, perusing every new record of geographical science as it appeared, filling common-place books with quotations, planning, and writing different works of his own. He had already attained a great age. Most of his friends had dropped off, one by one, from his side. Of these he gives, in one of his letters, a plaintive enumeration.¹ He was almost alone in the world. Under the circumstances I am not much surprised that Le Vayer should have taken a step which caused mingled wonder and humorous displeasure among the philosophers of the time; in other words, he re-married at the advanced age of seventy-eight years. Bayle regards the step as a kind of weak-minded reaction induced by the death of his son. Speaking of the latter event he says: 'He was very much afflicted by it, and his grief so confounded him that he married again, although he was more than seventy-five years old, and had never been in the habit of bewailing the loss of his first wife.'² Whence it would appear that his former marriage had not been altogether happy; a supposition which seems confirmed by portions of his own letters.³ Le Vayer survived his second marriage six years, and died at the age of eighty-four, in 1672.

Notices of our skeptic, in contemporary chronicles, are very rare. M. Etienne has diligently collected most of those which refer to personal characteristics, and his estimation in French society. Thus M. Vigneule-Marville, in his *Mélanges d'Histoire et de Littérature*, remarks: 'The French Academy considered him as one of its chief members; but the world regarded him as a peevish individual, who lived according to his own caprice, and as a skeptic philosopher. His physiognomy and dress proclaimed him to every beholder as an extraordinary man. He walked always with head erect, and eyes fixed on the signs of the streets through which he passed. Before I was told

¹ Letter xcvii., *Œuv.*, vii. p. 44, written apropos of Gassendi's death.

² Bayle, *Dict.*, art. 'Vayer.' Note G.

³ Comp. Letters lxxxvi. and xl., *Œuv.*, vol. vi.

who he was I took him for an astrologer, or for a searcher of secrets and of the philosopher's stone. Two stupendous follies crowned the end of his life. He composed a bad book called *Hexaméron Rustique*, and married a young wife (she was over forty !) at the age of seventy-eight years.' ¹ Tallemant des Reaux, in his vivacious but unveracious *Historiettes*, bestows on him a few passing notices of an equally uncomplimentary character. From these sources we learn that Le Vayer was dressed like a surgeon's operator or quack doctor, that he was ugly, small of stature, and had a habit of continually spitting ² . . . that he had the appearance of a priest or a charlatan . . . that he wore black shoes, with a suit of plush ³ . . . It is said that one day the servant of Gombauld, who knew that his master was secretly a Protestant and desired his creed not to be known, drove Le Vayer from the door, taking him for a Huguenot minister ⁴ . . . All that these trivial details go to prove is the sturdy independence of Le Vayer's character, and his self-assertion even in the smaller matters of daily life. We thereby learn that his ordinary conduct was in complete harmony with his philosophy. Often what is called eccentricity is only the natural protest of the wise man against the sequacious folly of the multitude.

Turning now to Le Vayer's writings, I purpose to divide them into three groups :—

I. The first including the *Dialogues of Orasius Tubero*, and such of his remaining works as manifest a directly skeptical purpose.

II. The second will comprehend some of his miscellaneous writings, in which *e.g.* his skeptical principles are applied to different subjects of knowledge.

III. For the third I reserve that work of his which I prefer to all the rest, as advocating religious tolerance, in an age and country when and where it was so much needed : I mean his treatise on *The Virtue of the Heathen*.

I. The commencement of the seventeenth century was in France, as throughout Europe, a period of much mental and spiritual disintegration. The various influences which gave birth and an early maturity to the Renaissance were for the most part still at work, and continued to produce a large amount of political and religious fermentation. Le Vayer's youth synchronizes with some of the religious wars which devastated France in the latter part of the sixteenth

¹ Vigneule Marville, *Mélanges*, ii. p. 328.

² Tallemant des Reaux. Ed. Bruxelles, 12mo, iv. p. 33.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. iv. p. 265.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. iv. p. 27.

century. His manhood was contemporaneous with the social and political disturbances of the Fronde. Both the religious and political commotion were in truth parts of the same general movement. By their struggle for religious and mental freedom the Huguenots were gradually becoming acquainted with, and enamoured of, political liberty. Their aspirations in the last particular were largely shared by the more moderate and liberal among Catholics, and acquired substantial form by means of the perpetual wars and the autocratic government and fiscal exactions of Louis XIV.

While the old landmarks both of church and state were thus rudely shaken, philosophical thought added its quota to the general unsettlement of men's ideas. Montaigne's *Essais*, Rabelais' works, Ramus's intrepid spirit and persistent labours, Charron's wisdom and Descartes' philosophy—not to mention other influences, *e.g.* those of general culture, which do not come within the scope of our subject—were all so many elements and indications of philosophical disturbance. In the preceding century we saw, in the case of Ramus, that papal Christianity had found a lay coadjutor in the Aristotelian philosophy. Both the one and the other had a common interest in opposing freedom of thought and enquiry. Now the alliance existed no longer; at least it had become embarrassing and useless to the chief contracting power, the Church. Aristotle had been weighed in the balances, and found wanting. Association with his scholastic disciples and expounders had hence become a source of weakness rather than of strength. For the time he had to give place to Sextus Empirikus, and Sganarelle, in *L'Amour Médecin*, when he turned, in his matrimonial perplexity from Pancratius the Peripatetic, with his wordy saws and unmeaning distinctions, to Marphurius the Pyrrhonist, with his uncertainty and suspense, was in reality a type of the human intellect, and of the only alternative which for the time being was held out for its acceptance;¹—the modern constructive sciences of Descartes and Bacon being as yet only in their infancy. We thus perceive, and this I candidly allow, that skepticism performs the same functions for a large general philosophical development, as it does for the mental growth of the individual, *i.e.* it forms a propædæutik or preparatory stage to a distinct evolution or undoubted conviction.

One of the chief special features of this general movement is brought forcibly before us by Le Vayer: I mean the various beliefs, doctrines, opinions, and maxims of antiquity—those precious seeds of

¹ In the first dialogue of Orasius Tubero, Le Vayer, with a somewhat unusual stretch of magnanimity, allows the dogmatist to remain unconvinced by the skeptical reasonings of his adversary, and to elect to continue as he is, *viz.* a Peripatetic. *O. T.*, i. p. 83.

enlightenment which, like grains of wheat in an Egyptian mummy, had so long been buried in the ignorance of the dark ages, but which, when scattered broadcast by the Renaissance, proved so wonderfully that they had not lost their vitality. We have already seen how completely quotation usurped in Montaigne the place of original thought; not that he was by any means defective in mental power, but that he deferred too much (notwithstanding his protests on the subject) to writers whose chief authority in many cases consisted in their antiquity. Le Vayer is a still greater offender in this respect.¹ No doubt both one and the other endeavoured to assimilate the wisdom of the ancients, to give the old coinage a new French stamp and once more to put it general circulation. But, using the well-known simile of Bacon, which has been adopted by Le Vayer, both the one and the other had more of the ant in their composition than was really advantageous; or, if they were like the bee, and tried to transform their many flowered riches into a new compound, it must be admitted that the transformation was not always successful. At the same time a retrospect of the history of modern European literature may provoke a doubt whether the influx of classical learning in the Renaissance was not like the full meal hastily devoured by a hungry man, the digestion and assimilation of which is naturally a much more elaborate and protracted process; and whether in that case the part of the ant was not more important for the time than that of the bee. One fact emerges from the comparison of Le Vayer's quotations and authorities with those of Montaigne, viz., that the stream of ancient literature had become perceptibly broader and fuller since the publication of the *Essais*.

Le Vayer also suggests those influences of a not dissimilar kind which were produced by the more frequent inter-communication of different

¹ Apparently without acknowledgment. Cf. *Redargutio Phil. Op.*, Ellis and Spedding, iii. p. 583. 'Empirici enim, formicæ more, congerunt tantum et utuntur. Rationales autem araneorum more, telas ex se conficiunt, apis ratio media est quæ materiam ex floribus tum horti quam agri elicit, sed simul etiam eam propria facultate vertit et digerit.' Le Vayer quotes and expands the simile rather inauspiciously after some severe strictures on plagiarism. (*Eur.*, ii. pt. 2, p. 518. . . . 'Mais la mouche à miel tient la voie moienne qui doit être suivie quand elle choisit sa matière au dehors, qu'elle transforme ensuite, rendant son travail utile et à elle, et à tout le genre humain.' The simile is a favourite one, it need hardly be added, with poets: so Waller in his verses which are, however, more musical than *Bee-cultural*:—

'You know the sweetest of things
From various flowers the bees compose,
Yet no particular taste it brings
Of woodbine or lilac, pink or rose.'

nations. As we have remarked in the case of preceding skeptics, the intellectual restlessness of the age was frequently manifested by foreign travels and explorations,—mental disquiet and curiosity thus transforming itself, as it often does, into physical locomotion. Le Vayer imitates in this respect Bruno and Vanini. To slake his thirst for knowledge, or rather to find arguments to support his skepticism, he traversed Europe, note-book in hand, making enquiries and observations on the beliefs and customs of different peoples and localities; and, as we shall find, accepting every novelty in thought or usage as an additional proof of the nullity of all absolute truth. Added to this intercourse among the scholars and politicians of different European nations, there was a large and continual influx of extra European travels and discoveries, which helped to swell still further the sense of human eccentricity and variability in the estimation of such thinkers as Le Vayer. The maritime nations of Western Europe were, during the first half of the seventeenth century, in a perpetual fever of geographical enterprise. The Spanish had begun to retire from the field, and their place was occupied by English, Dutch and Portuguese. This national rivalry had the effect of securing a considerable harvest of geographical lore; and hence whatever merit the skeptical arguments from differences of creed and opinions might be said to have, it was now placed on a more substantial basis than had been hitherto possible.

Le Vayer was particularly fitted by constitution, sympathy, education and circumstances to take advantage of these manifold influences. His youth, we have seen reason to suppose, was a period of intellectual stimulation as well as of moral laxity, and his conversion was hardly more than the quickening of an innate taste for philosophical speculation. The literature of his earlier life consisted of the works of his own predecessors in free-thought. As he was a personal friend of Mdlle. de Gournay, it seems probable that one element in their friendship was a common respect or affection for Montaigne. But Charron is the thinker who appears to have had the greatest share in his mental development. He quotes his extreme utterances on religion with approval, calls him—no doubt in allusion to his *Sagesse*—‘the Sage.’¹ There is in truth more than one point of resemblance between Charron and Le Vayer. Besides the skepticism common to both, they were men who saw the need, in the existing corruption of papal Christianity, of an autonomous self-asserting morality. Both cherished similar opinions and aspirations on the subjects of political and religious liberty. Both laid stress on the multiplicity of religions

¹ *Orasius Tubero*, i. p. 394.

from the philosopher's point of view, and both adhered to Christianity as a national, social and geographical necessity. In style Le Vayer is no doubt inferior to Charron, as the closet student must always be inferior to the man who has studied eloquence for a public and practical purpose; but in both cases it is marked by the same qualities of clearness of expression and a sedate gravity which seems to despise the ornate graces of composition. Even in external appearance and carriage there would seem to have been a marked similarity. Both were men of grave, reverent demeanour; and if Charron might be called a born philosopher whom chance or accident had transmuted into a divine, Le Vayer might be said to have the hortatory aptitudes of a preacher, though fortune and circumstances had made him a recluse philosopher. But whatever the effective sway of Charron and other French free-thinkers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, La Vayer's intellect was not to be confined by national bounds, or the limits of his mother tongue. As I have said, he was a good linguist, and having found the key to the works of the arch-skeptic Sextus, he drew his nutriment from that fountain-head.

The manner in which he speaks of Sextus can only be compared to that of a devotee addressing his favourite saint or tutelary angel. He styles him 'our venerable Sextus,' 'venerable master,' 'our beloved Sextus,' 'our dear Patron Sextus,'¹ and other terms of endearment which certainly tend to show that extreme skepticism as a principle of freedom may, in a time of mental thralldom, excite an affectionate and grateful enthusiasm which would be otherwise in my opinion inexplicable.

But while Le Vayer imbibed the doctrines of Sextus as a hungry man sits down to a feast, there was one point of his teaching on which he laid particular stress. This was the ten modes of skeptical suspense which, as you remember, occur in the *Hypotyposes*—a chapter, by the way, which Le Vayer calls 'ce divin chapitre de dix moyens.'² It is, however, on one of these means, the tenth, *i.e.* the argument from the variety of human beliefs and manners, that he especially insists. While all other aspects of skepticism come in for occasional recognition and approval, it is on this that he expends his greatest labour. Perhaps it would not be too much to say that no skeptic ever elaborated the 'Geographical argument' as much as Le Vayer. I think it would have sufficed had none of the other

¹ *Orasius Tubero*, i. 125, 129, 152, 160. He calls the *Hypotyposes*, 'un inestimable et divin écrit qu'il faut lire avec pause et attention,' and a 'livre d'or.'

² *Orasius Tubero*, i. 129.

Tropoi existed as a basis for his skepticism. As I have remarked, it was peculiarly adapted to Le Vayer's tastes and sympathies. It was in harmony with his desultory, unsystematic mode of thought, with his curious inquisitive idiosyncrasy, with his contrasting methods, with his wide sympathies, and with his rather superficial intellect. The argument had, for all really useful purposes, been sufficiently insisted on by preceding skeptics; but it received a new stimulus by fresh discoveries. To every new traveller with his budget of wonders, Le Vayer gave his most serious attention and unhesitating credence. The suspense which he professed to award to so many beliefs was itself suspended in presence of the marvels recounted of other times and foreign peoples. His philosophy was a very Desdemona in the rapt wonderment and easy faith with which she devoured all kinds of improbabilities, merely because they were foreign importations.

‘The cannibals that each other eat,
The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads
Do grow beneath their shoulders.’

In his *Geography of the Prince* we find the fictions of travellers, the mythology of poets, the dreams of ancient geographers or naturalists; he collects something from every quarter. Pliny and Marco Polo contribute equally to his geographical stores. The fables of an Eldorado and Prester John are placed side by side with unquestionable facts. It is recorded that when he was at the point of death his friend Bernier came to see him. ‘Well,’ said the dying man, ‘what news of the great Mogul!’ These were almost his last words.¹ If the story is not true, it is at least ‘well found.’ M. Etienne says,² rather ill-naturedly, that Le Vayer ‘spent half his life in perusing travels, and the other half in arranging his antitheses and contrasts.’

One advantage which the geographical argument possesses, from the skeptical point of view, is its comprehensiveness; for if humanity expresses its ideas and wants in countless different manners, at least there is some kinship implied in the possession of similar wants and feelings. Between the adoration of a spiritual and universal Being, and the worship of a fetish, there is no doubt an enormous interval; still it is one of degree rather than of kind. There is therefore no domain of human thought to which the geographical argument may not be considered applicable. True, the force of the argument cannot be considered great in the present day; but, *quantum valcat*, it may be applied with considerable power to theology, religious worship, ethical notions, and manners and customs. Our skeptic employs it to prove

¹ *Dict. Historique* of Chandon et Delandine, art. ‘Mothe le Vayer.’

² *Essai*, p. 25.

the impossibility of any single religion as universal truth. He does not except even Christianity, though he thinks supernatural faith needed to determine our choice of that to which we shall adhere. "When we contemplate," he says,¹ 'as a great ocean the immense and prodigious number of human religions, we find it impossible, without faith as a compass directing our mind firmly to the pole of Divine grace, to avoid errors and tempests more lasting and dangerous than those of Ulysses, inasmuch as they bring us finally to a spiritual shipwreck. An old Chinese marble records that since the first man there have only existed 365 religions; but we can perceive that this is an unreal number, being that of the days in a year, for the sum total in such a case cannot be determined. . . . Now amongst that infinity of religions, there is no man who does not believe that he possesses the true, and, condemning all the rest, will not fight for his altar and hearth to the last drop of his blood.'² I am loth to suppose that Le Vayer was a religious eclectic or cosmopolitan, a believer unattached; indeed there are too many indications of a distinct preference for Christianity to allow of such a supposition; but he quotes with approbation the opinion of Proklus that a philosopher should not adhere to one particular mode of worshipping the gods—he should rather be an *initiate*, and, as it were, a priest in all kinds of religions. In the same spirit of philosophical Catholicism, he quotes Themistius: 'There is more than one road of piety to heaven, and probably God takes pleasure, just as Nature does everywhere, in such a variety.' That such a diversity of creeds might have its uses he seeks to show from his experience of court life: 'Do not we see that courts are rendered much more illustrious by the difference in nationality of its officers and the variety of its ministers. . . . The Scotch guard, joined with that of France and Switzerland contributes as much to the majesty as the security of a Louvre. Upon this basis the Romans erected their Pantheon, and the temple of Solomon received the prayers of all the peoples in the earth.'⁴ He adduces the fact of the same king building temples for the idols of his different wives as apparently an instance of enlightened toleration as well as a proof of his wisdom.

In the same spirit the Persian kings acted when they bestowed liberty of worship on the Jews; and the Roman Emperor Severus is said to have revered equally the images of Jesus Christ, of Abraham, Orpheus, and Apollonius. Le Vayer quotes Cardan's saying that not only a true but even a false religion should be esteemed. But his

¹ *Orasius Tubero*, i. p. 377.

² *Orasius Tubero*, i. p. 379.

³ *Orasius Tubero*, i. p. 381.

⁴ Comp. 1 Kings viii. 41, 42 and 60 verses.

greatest authority on this subject he finds in Justin Martyr, whose well-known opinions on the Logos he thus freely renders: 'all those who follow the right use of the natural reason, though they were even reputed Atheists, were in reality Christians, because Jesus Christ is the Divine Word, the Logos, and that natural reason of which all men are partakers, "which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Whence he (Justin) concludes that Socrates, Herakleitus, and so many others, generally reputed barbarians and without true religion, were nevertheless really Christians, since they observed those laws of right reason, which most of the Fathers think sanctified Melchizedec, Job and his friends, Abraham, Elias, Ananias, and others of Gentile origin, whom both the Old and the New Testament agree to canonize; as if moral virtues attracted Divine grace in all those who practised them, according to that axiom of theology: "To the man who does what is in him, God does not deny His grace."'¹ The argument is drawn out by Le Vayer to considerable length, and supported by much geographical and historical learning. But his authorities are massed together in a haphazard and slovenly manner, without the least regard to time, place, value, or any other standard either of method or of criticism. He agrees with Charron that there is nothing in Nature which has not, at some time or other, been deified, and that all religions alike have some qualities repugnant to common sense.² As to the authority which in the last resort should determine the religion of any people, he concurs with Pomponazzi, Machiavelli and our own Hobbes, that it is the governing power. Hence he thinks it as wrong for any one to attempt to propagate a religious belief contrary to that of the nation or people among whom he may dwell, as to openly inculcate disobedience of its laws. He agrees with his master Sextus. The true skeptic philosopher should conform to the authoritative religion of the country in which he lives just as to its ordinary usages, or to its written laws.

M. Etienne thinks that, in his zeal for toleration and complete liberty of thought, Le Vayer has suffered himself to be carried beyond his own standpoint. Indeed he considers the whole of the first volume of *Orasius Tubero* as containing bolder theories and sentiments than are to be found in any of his subsequent works. But the difference, if it can be said to exist, is more in form than in reality. Few writers practised more assiduously than Le Vayer the art of dressing up the same argument in a slightly different form, so as to impart to it a fictitious semblance of novelty. *Prima facie* there can be no doubt that Le Vayer is guilty of having betrayed the Christianity he professed, and thereby lays himself open to the re-

¹ *Orasius Tubero*, i. 381.

² Comp. preceding chapter on Charron.

proaches of M. Etienne, who thus addresses him :¹ " You proclaim your respect for religion, but you admit yourself that the Atheists of our time employ the same artifice. It is common in our civil wars, in which even those who carry arms against the king protest that they are faithful servants of his majesty. Apparently, it is in devotion to God that you enumerate all nations that are Atheists,—that you refute the proofs of God's existence and of his providence. . . . Suppose I agree to divest myself of my reason, where is the new and vigorous faith you profess to substitute for it? You cannot stop just there; you throw me into new perplexities; I can only discern contradictions, interminable contrasts; here an indiscreet and ferocious zeal, there complete indifference to the fact of religion; in another place the alternative of tolerance or persecution. Nor is that all. You compare religions among themselves, you triumph in their diversity. Dogmas, dreams, superstitions, revelations, you sift them altogether minutely. As a result, I agree with you: he who would select by human reason the true religion would find himself greatly embarrassed. But where then is faith, and what has become of your introduction to Christianity, your "evangelical preparation"? For to say that men plunged into that immense ocean of human religions must have faith for a compass, is a mere fiction. To all appearance he has no compass. It is submerged with the rest; and in throwing into the sea everything which seemed to hinder the advance of the ship, you have thrown the compass overboard.' Although it is the ratiocination more than the reasoner that M. Etienne thus eloquently impugns, for he agrees that there is no valid reason for disputing Le Vayer's Christianity, we must admit that these reproaches are well merited. Had M. Etienne possessed our wider experience of skeptical argumentation he would not have been quite so surprised at Le Vayer's inconsistency, nor perhaps so ready to believe that his rebuke adduced considerations and pointed to consequences which Le Vayer himself had overlooked. Our skeptic had not studied so long and so carefully his master Sextus as not to be aware of the arguments generally employed against his philosophy, nor the best means of obviating them.²

The same method is applied to ethics, and with similar results. In the wide and congenial field of the infinite varieties of human customs and ethical notions, our geographic philosopher is as much at home as in that of the different religions of humanity. He takes care to remind us that ethics is derived from *ethos*, a habit or custom, and is therefore a science whose root-thought implies a latitude commen-

¹ *Essai*, p. 33.

² Comp. e.g. *Crasius Tubero*, i. p. 19; ii. p. 12.

surate with the unlimited divergence of ordinary human action. He ransacks every part of the globe then known in search of these curiosities of moral science, and has recourse for the same purpose to every available chronicle or history both ancient and modern; little regard being had to critical discrimination or verification of authorities. Here also, as in his treatment of religions, his suspense is suspended, or at least he employs an unbounded credulity to gather arguments and instances on which to found his suspense. By marshalling and contrasting his acquisitions in this field he is able to reduce ethics to a condition in which the guiding principle of every act is the custom of the country in which it is done. Whence, a philosopher journeying round the globe and conforming in every instance to the usages of the country through which he passed, could not but attain to the conclusion of the complete indifference of all human actions. Le Vayer makes the journey seated in his study chair, and seeing with the eyes of various travellers and historians, who frequently record as facts the mere hearsay of untrustworthy informants. Theoretically, he also arrives at the same conclusion, though in practice he is a stoical and Christian moralist, fully alive to the imperative claims of duty, and disposed to fulfil them.

As a rule Le Vayer's treatment of this subject is, in his wonted discursive manner, without much attention to order and congruity; his chief object being skilful juxtaposition or striking contrasts, *e.g.* 'we call those thieves who steal the property of individuals, but conquerors who steal kingdoms.'¹ . . . 'Theft has its Mercury and its divinity who made it honourable among Spartans, Germans, Cilicians and Egyptians. There is not a vice,' he ironically remarks, 'which by its magnificence may not degenerate into a virtue.'² To assassinate a man is to be an infamous homicide, to kill 100,000 is the act of an hero. . . . 'To lie, in ordinary social intercourse, is to betray society by a shameless and despicable act; to lie in the interests of the state is to be a skilful diplomatist, and an excellent politician.' 'To write fables for truths, to give posterity fictions for history, is the deed of an impostor, or of an easy and careless writer; but to write fancies for divine revelations, and reveries for heaven-suggested laws is, as in the case of Minos, Numa and Mahomet, etc., to be great prophets and the very sons of Jupiter.'³ The same con-

¹ 'Il est glorieux et honorable d'estre grand pyrate, pourveu qu'on soit Alexandre le Grand,' for this sentiment he quotes Seneca, Diogenes Laertius and Cato. *Orasius Tubero*, i. pp. 43, 44.

² *Ibid.*, i. p. 43. 'Extrema sceleris virtus occupat,' a quotation for which he gives no reference.

³ *Ibid.*, i. p. 45.

traries of opinion exist on what might seem to be fundamental necessities of all human existence. Most men suppose that filial piety is a dictate of Nature, that bodily health is a blessing, that good sense is of great value, that the mildness of temperate climates is an advantage, that the good government of nations promotes the happiness of individuals; but judging from the notions and usages of certain peoples all these opinions are at least disputable.

Sometimes we find special sections devoted to the consideration of the diversities in one particular of ordinary human conduct, as, *e.g.* different usages in respect of eating¹ and drinking, or of marriage, or of burial; but as a rule Le Vayer prefers an easy discursiveness, which allows him to roam at will through the rich collection of human eccentricities and perversities he has so carefully accumulated; but which is not without disadvantage for the reader in exposing him to repetitions and redundancies which might have been avoided with decided benefit to the form of the argument.

We need not, I think, follow our skeptic further into this part of the geographical argument. It will suffice to give one of his frequent summaries of its main scope. 'There is nothing,' he says, 'so frivolous, which may not somewhere be esteemed of great importance; there is no folly, provided it be well followed, which does not pass for wisdom; there is no virtue which may not be taken for a vice, nor a vice which somewhere does not stand for a virtue.'² . . . And in another part, after a full discussion of the subject, he concludes, 'Were we to examine the rest of the field of moral science, we should find everywhere so much variety as to demonstrate clearly that there is nothing in it firm and determined, and that our vices are dependent on our opinions' (*quæ putamus verum*) as Seneca remarked. . . .' No doubt these notions would seem exceedingly hazardous if we were not aware that for the most part they are merely an exercise in skeptical rhetoric. For just as in his ostensible equalization of all the religions and worships in the world, there is still a real reservation of Christianity, so notwithstanding his free utterances on morality, we know him, as I have said, to be an austere follower of Epictetus and Charron—a thinker who was in reality more a moralist than a philosopher, and who insisted on a rigid performance of human duty independently of the sanctions, the stimulants, or deterrents of religion.

I have remarked that the geographical argument as such is not now employed for the same purposes as by Le Vayer; what was then

¹ This forms the subject of the second dialogue of the first volume of *Crasius Tubero*.

² *Ibid.*, i. p. 42.

disputed is now conceded. No one now wishes to contend for the derivation of the whole human race from a single pair, nor for the community of beliefs, thoughts and customs which was no doubt a fair deduction from that opinion. Hence we are not surprised at any revelations as to the curious ideas or manners of uncivilized races, which the returning traveller from Central Africa or elsewhere sometimes places before us in the present day, nor are we thereby alarmed for the existence of truth, or the perpetuity of Christianity. And yet the argument, or rather the principle underlying it, still holds its position in philosophical discussion by being applied to extra-terrene space. Indeed the infinity of space must imply, if it does not postulate, infinite possibilities of truth or existence; and therefore will always be of service to those who compensate by imagination for the restrictions of the senses, and the laws of our terrestrial environment. Hamlet's saying,—

‘ There are more things in heaven and earth,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy :’

is to many minds a general protest against absolute dogmatism. The well-known application of it by John Stuart Mill in the hypothesis of a distant world wherein $2+2$ might possibly make five is but an easy transference of the reasoning from geography to astronomy. That it might be thus hypothetically extended was seen by Le Vayer. ‘ It is,’ he says,¹ ‘ a marvellous vanity and audacity for man, who hardly knows what passes around him, to suppose that he has a universal knowledge of everything under heaven; and this, though he can never cast a glance over the whole face of Nature, nor impart to his mind those complete revolutions which shall be concentric with the universe, *‘orbes mentis habens concentricos universa.’* . . . He points out the ordinary mode of passing from the known to the unknown: ‘ We first take note of France, then another part of Europe, then something still more distant, and we imagine that all the rest are the same, without once giving thought to the immeasurable extent of this enormous universe.’² I am aware that, thus employed, the argument may be of use in repressing exuberant dogmatism or an affectation of omniscience. At the same time I think its dangerous properties preponderate. It leaves the door open to an unlimited vista of skepticism, it attempts to destroy actualities by potentialities, to weaken facts by surmisings, and for the known to substitute the unknown. Indeed the infinite, with its mysterious contents is both to the skeptic and to the transcendentalist a convenient retreat when pursued by the uncertainty, restlessness or limitation which are in-

¹ *Orasius Tubero*, i. p. 14.

² *Ibid.*, loc. cit.

evitable conditions of our existence as thinking beings. Like the dark cell of a mediæval sorcerer it enables the metaphysical alchemist to perform any amount of *hocus pocus* far removed from the sight or knowledge of the world. I have not the slightest wish to presume on the little knowledge I think I possess; but to abandon it, or what is not very dissimilar, to involve it in uncertainty by imagining a different state of things which may haply exist elsewhere, seems to me as absurd as if I were requested to throw away the little money I possess, and to trust instead to a promise, that at some future day, some unknown friend or other might perchance leave me a fortune. My answer to such a request would be, 'I respectfully decline to give up a certainty for a possibility, to resign my acquired experience, small as it is, for a larger but uncertain sphere of knowledge, and to exchange the positive conditions of thought and life on our Terra for the indefinite potentialities which may or may not pertain to Jovians or Saturnians.'

Returning to Le Vayer: though he lays especial stress on the argument just discussed, he does not confine himself to it. With more than the versatile eclecticism peculiar to skeptics, he employs all its methods in turn. His studies have made him acquainted with the whole armoury of unbelief, and he selects the weapon which lies nearest to his hand, without much attention to its intrinsic fitness, or to its congruity with the particular arm or mode of warfare he has last employed. Within the compass of his works may be found specimens of every form and method of skepticism which the perverse ingenuity of man has ever discovered. We have already noticed how he confounded Academic with Pyrrhonic skepticism, employing the characteristic arguments of each with perfect indifference. He also imitates the larger work of Sextus by applying the methods of skepticism to every branch of human science. He has a collection of 'problems' which are formed on the 'Yes and No' model of Aquinas and Abelard.¹ He pursues occasionally the verbal skepticism of William of Ockam.² He adopts the two-fold truth of Pomponazzi and others.³ He employs the tone of intellectual unrest and *ennui* of Cornelius Agrippa.⁴ He imitates the cynicism of Montaigne.⁵ He copies Charron in trying to construct a code of principles for everyday guidance. He is like Huet in attempting to make skepticism an 'evangelical preparation,' an introduction and propædæutic to Christianity⁶—while he frequently has recourse to the

¹ *Œuv.*, v. part ii. p. 220.

² *Orat. Tub.*, ii. p. 69.

³ *Ibid.*, i. p. 262.

⁴ *Le Prose Chagrin*, *passim*. Comp. Bayle, Art. 'Vayer.' Note F.

⁵ In *Hexaméron Rustique*.

⁶ By this is meant not that the object of Le Vayer's skepticism was Christian

critical skepticism of Bayle. If we wished to be severe we might call his collected works a veritable '*colluvies skepticorum*.' In milder phraseology, they are at least a miscellaneous collection of the methods of all skeptics of all time. This fact renders it unnecessary to examine in detail the various reasonings of Le Vayer. We have either met them already in a more developed form or we shall meet them in the course of future discussions. In his treatment of Reason he is not so openly and persistently aggressive as Montaigne, Pascal and Huet. Ideally, the possession and employment of Reason is a matter of immense importance—a fitting subject for the self-congratulations of reasoning beings. Practically however it must be regarded as of doubtful utility, at least it has not prevented the mass of mankind being 'mostly fools.' Reasonable men are on the contrary rarer than monsters; as if, says Le Vayer, 'Reason were opposed to the ordinary course of nature.'¹ Human communities and policies are only a collection and congeries of minds which are common, promiscuous (*impertinens*) and ill-formed. Gentleman, artizan, prince, magistrate, labourer, all are in this respect on the same level. 'They differ in toga not in mind.' 'It was by pitting their own wiser judgments against popular folly that Sokrates and so many others came by their fates.' He concludes 'that if Reason is beneficial it is in deserts and solitudes; in the concourse and business of life it is contraband, and like false coin, does more harm to the possessor than good.'² The original intent, the ideal function, of Reason he assures us is Search for Truth. It does not matter much to Le Vayer any more than other skeptics that Truth should be absolutely undiscoverable—a kind of *ignis fatuus* which the creator has placed in the world in order to give human intellects continual employment, as well as, I presume, dexterity in crossing dialectical bogs and extricating themselves from mental pitfalls. This is according to our author the acceptation which is marked on the word. Truth (*aletheia*) being according to him derived from two words which imply a Divine wandering or vagabondage (*erratio seu vagatio divina*)—a perpetual search for the unfindable.³ The same purpose is marked on the word *mens*, which according to Cassiodorus and with the approval of Le Vayer comes from the Greek word for moon,⁴ such origin of course denoting a community of fluctuation, and hence establishing a close connexion

dogma, as it was in the case of Huet's skepticism. His object was simply skeptical ataraxia. At the same time he occasionally touches upon Huet's position in an off-handed manner, as e.g. *Orasius Tubero*, i. 345, where he says that '*epoche* (suspens) peut passer pour une heureuse preparation evangelique.'

¹ *Orasius Tubero*, i. 58.

² *Ibid.*, i. 60.

³ *Ibid.*, i. 78.

⁴ *Ibid.*, ii. 234.

between thinkers and lunatics. The argument itself, we must admit, is no insuperable bar to the latter inference.

Le Vayer's conclusions are as various as his methods, and are asserted in a similar haphazard manner. Whenever it is possible without impeachment of common-sense or self-stultification, he adopts the Pyrrhonic suspense. So far as his wishes are concerned the word *epoché* sums up his philosophical creed,¹ just as his philosophical devotion centres in the name of its greatest teacher. It is the climax of human attainment, the fruition of all human effort. When suspense is undesirable we must needs be content with that alloy of truth called probability. In the first volume of *Orasius Tubero*, which his critics maintain to be the most free-spoken portion of all his writings,² he sneers at those who in despair of attaining truth lay hold on probability, as gentle Ixions, who embrace the cloud for Juno, and the bulrushes for the nymph.

‘Corpore pro Nymphæ calamos tenuisse palustris.’³

But in his second volume he treats probability with much more consideration. ‘See then how in the place of truth we substitute the probable; instead of a criterion certain and arrogant, we content ourselves with likelihood; in place of signs demonstrative and infallible, we use those only which are gently indicative or suggestive.’⁴ It is quite in harmony with the superficial character of Le Vayer's intellect that he seems unable to discern any vital distinction between the suspense of one class of skeptics and the probability of another employed as a complete philosophical method. We shall have to return to this and similar points when we sum up his position among our skeptics. Leaving for the present his method to consider its application, I will only say that he affords a very complete illustration of the shiftiness of the unscrupulous advocate, who resorts to any tactics which may serve to secure a victory. Hence I am inclined to agree with M. Etienne when he remarks that, ‘Montaigne teaches us how to think, Le Vayer only how to argue’; though of course Montaigne's thought is largely argumentative, and Le Vayer's contentions are not utterly devoid of thought.

II. One result of Le Vayer's wonderful literary fecundity is an

¹ ‘O precieuse époque!’ he exclaims, ‘ô sûre et agréable retraite d'esprit’ (*Enc.*, v. pt. 2, p. 189). ‘Cette belle parole *επεχω*,’ he elsewhere calls it (*Oras. Tub.*, i. p. 172). Le Vayer compares the different modes of *epoché* to ‘the sly foxes which carry fire and destruction into the Philistines' corn.’ Also to ‘the jawbone of an ass wherewith Samson defeated his enemies.’

² So M. Etienne, p. 28. So also Bartholmæss, *Huet ou le Scepticisme Théologique*, p. 179.

³ *Oras. Tub.*, i. p. 79.

⁴ *Ibid.*, ii. p. 62.

elaborate, though *suo more*, a discursive application of his principles to every branch of human science then in existence. No modern skeptic, not even Bayle, has entered so fully into the effects of unlimited doubt on different systems of dogma. Peripateticism, as a complete and generally acknowledged philosophy, was now at its last gasp; but, like all methods of thought which have largely commanded the assent or administered to the supposed needs of mankind, it died hard. Le Vayer thought it worth while to give a parting refutation of the expiring philosophy, by way I suppose of fleshing the double-edged sword which he had borrowed of his master Sextus. In the second volume of *Orasius Tubero* he subjects the main divisions of Peripateticism—its logic, its physics, and its ethics—to a skeptical examination, with the result, I need hardly add, of demonstrating the superiority of Sextus to Aristotle. But Le Vayer is not content with slaying a moribund enemy; he assails with equal courage and success the different sciences and modes of knowledge which were rising, like so many phœnixes, out of the ashes of mediæval philosophy. His treatment of history is instructive, both as exemplifying his method and its unscrupulous character. We have observed how, in his geographical argument, his Pyrrhonic suspense is for the time set aside when he is engaged in accumulating the materials for his human contrasts and variations. History as well as geography was then of use. No story was too absurd, no narrative so palpably fictitious, as not to serve his purpose; but when the object had been attained, when the universal chaos of all human ideas and usages had conclusively established the impossibility of truth, another conception of history is set forth. We have then duly presented, in argumentative form, Walpole's well-known verdict. We are assured that all history is false,¹ the only difference between the best and worst historians consisting merely of varying degrees of unveracity. The very conception of a truthful historian, says Le Vayer, is enough to prove the impossibility of his existence. 'If we accept the maxim of Polybius, that truth is the essence of history, as justice is the essence of good government, an historian will not be less rare than the perfect orator which Cicero imagined, or the all-accomplished architect depicted by Vitruvius.'² It is clearly a result of human

¹ Other writers besides Horace Walpole (some of them probably from pure love of paradox) have called attention to the unveracity of history. Sir Philip Sidney, *e.g.* remarks, 'So as the other artists, and especially the historian, affirming many things, can in the cloudy knowledge of mankind hardly escape from many lies.'—*Apologie for Poetrie*. So Dr. Johnson as reported by Boswell: 'He said of history that we know little of it except a few facts and dates. The colouring he said was conjectural.'

² '*Du Peu de Certitude en l'Histoire.*' *Œuv.*, v. pt. ii. p. 443.

infirmity that all historical narration must be more or less tinged with falsehood. For what is history but the percolation of bygone times and events, human motives and actions, through the strata of ignorance or prejudice of the writer. There is no principle which compels us to accept what history tells us if there is any room for doubt. The events of early Christianity, even employing the most trustworthy authorities, are open to dispute. The wars of Troy are set forth with such a variety of legends and traditions, and embellished with so many contradictory details of mythology and romance, that we are compelled to suspend our faith in their existence. Nor are we more certain of later events. The date of the taking of Constantinople by the Turks is by no means certain. Besides other causes which contribute to this uncertainty, there is perpetually at work that of individual prepossession—the ‘personal equation’ in history. It is most difficult, says our author,¹ to divest ourselves altogether of our humanity (*hominem penitus exuere*) so as to yield nothing to the interests and passions by which it is mostly swayed. ‘I hold it certain that if we possessed the commentaries of Vercingetorix or of Divitiacus, we should find narratives very different from Caesar’s; and those old Gauls and Teutons would have imparted to their wars with Rome aspects altogether contrary to those which the first of Roman Emperors has given to them.’

The best means of obviating this excess of individuality is by adding to it, to secure variety—hence he thinks Greece and Rome fortunate in possessing so many chronicles of their virtues and triumphs—or else by making due allowance in every case for the prejudice, religious or national, of the historian. So we must not believe Gentiles when they are speaking of Jews, nor Jews in what they have written of Christians, nor even Christians when, impelled by a zeal inconsistent with historical fidelity, they speak ill of Moors and Mahometans.² Out of his large repository of historical lore, Le Vayer has no difficulty in selecting striking examples of the mistakes and unveracities of historians. A Spanish biographer, for example, of Philip IV. made the Elector Palatine pronounce a brilliant oration to the soldiers at the Battle of Prague when he was not even present. Among these falsities Le Vayer places the fictitious genealogies of great kings or eminent personagès, instancing the attempts of English historians, mentioned by Matthew Paris, to trace Alfred the Great to Adam.³ Even the marriage of an historian would seem occasionally to exercise a detrimental effect, for the latter portions of De Thou’s history differ considerably in tone from the earlier, because his second wife was distantly related to the

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 462.² *Ibid.*, p. 46.³ *Ibid.*, p. 472.

Guises. The conclusion our skeptic arrives at is that, whatever other merits or uses history may have, it possesses but little certainty. I must add that he excepts in terms the writings of the Old and New Testament as having been dictated by the Holy Ghost.¹

Among Le Vayer's minor treatises is a *Skeptical Discourse on Music*, which attempts to introduce doubt and uncertainty into the principles and functions of that science. Here again we have the customary display of erudition culled from every available source. The plan he pursues of devoting half the work to favourable opinions of music, and the remainder, 'the skeptical obverse of the medal,' as he terms it, to an unfavourable or analytical estimate of it, is precisely that of Sextus Empeirikus in his treatise *Adversus Musicos*,³ from which he also derived a considerable portion of his illustrations and general material. The tendency of Le Vayer's work, which is however imperfectly wrought out, is the denial of any necessary *à priori* affinity between musical sounds on the one hand, and the human ear or nervous organization on the other. The accidental character of its origin, and its dependence on the plasticity, physical and mental, of the human organism, is shown by the variation in the principles of the science among different races. Nor is man the sole possessor of a susceptibility to musical sounds, the same sensitiveness being also manifested by various kinds of lower animals. I need not point out that in this part of his skeptical investigation Le Vayer is distinctly on the track of our modern scientists. A definition of music which would satisfy the demands of our latest instructors would, I presume, be something of this kind: 'The impinging of certain aerial vibrations following each other in rhythmical sequences or combined in due harmonic proportions on a sensitive mechanism of the human ear, whence they are transferred by means of certain nerves to the sensorium. Such physical organizations being adapted partly by inheritance, partly by education, for responding to them.'

Among his multifarious studies Le Vayer paid considerable attention to Philology, with especial reference to French and cognate languages. This was at that time a new science, the product of the development which the national language and literature had attained. In the earlier half of the seventeenth century the language was passing through an important crisis in its growth, it was on the point of achieving its brilliant maturity. The process was partly destructive and partly constructive. On the one hand there were foreign accretions to be eliminated; words, phrases and idioms borrowed from other languages, mostly Italian, which were alien to the genius and rudimentary principles of the French tongue, and consequently had

¹ Op. cit., p. 475.

² *Œuv.*, v. pt. ii. p. 95.

³ *Adv. Math.*, lib. vi. § 19.

never been incorporated into the works of its best writers. On the other hand attempts were made to formulate, codify, and impress with the stamp of authority, the grammatical rules, words and expressions which had acquired undisputed currency. What the language was capable of performing had already been shown by Descartes' *Discourse on Method* and the *Cid* of Corneille, while the masterpieces of Pascal and Bossuet were not far distant. Sanguine minds thought the time had come for fixing the forms and usages of the language, and introducing order and discipline where confusion and anarchy previously reigned supreme. The guiding principle of their efforts was, perhaps, the theory that, after the brisk fermentation of youth, languages, like human beings, should attain a period of settlement and clarification—their best results and noblest triumphs being stereotyped and, so to speak, bottled off, sealed, and deposited in bins for the use of all future ages. To this synthetic and legislative movement the Academy gave the sanction of its name and the exuberant energies of a youthful institution, eager to justify its existence by useful activity. Thus acting, it was only carrying into effect one main object of its establishment. The letters patent by which Louis XIII. had instituted it describe its chief function as the 'establishment of certain rules for the French language, so that it may be able to treat of all arts and sciences.'¹ It is easy to see that a purpose so described, however expedient when confined within due limits, might easily assume the character of an intolerable despotism. Style and speech are just as impatient of uniformity as any other domain of the human intellect, and an attempt to create an orthodox standard of linguistic perfection must no doubt sadly interfere with the natural simultaneous processes of growth and decay which necessarily pertain to every living language. The possibility of such a danger appeared to the irrepressibly free instincts of Le Vayer a subject of alarm. He was no more inclined to defer to an infallible authority in language than to an unbending law or standard of truth or perfection in any other department of knowledge. We must admit that Le Vayer's application of his skeptical principles was being justified to a very considerable extent. The efforts of the purists of the Academy were both frivolous and mischievous.² One

¹ Cf. Nisard, *Hist. de la Littérature Française*, ii. p. 193. Dean Swift, it will be remembered, made a proposal to Lord Oxford to found a similar society for the final establishment and consolidation of the English language. To use his own words, 'What I have most at heart is that some method should be thought on for ascertaining and fixing our language for ever, after such alterations are made in it as shall be thought requisite.' *Swift's Works*, Ed. Roscoe, ii. p. 258.

² Comp. Etienne, *Essai*, p. 169, etc.; Nisard, *Histoire de la Littérature Française*, ii. p. 207, etc.

of them boasted that in the course of five volumes he had never once used the conjunction *car*. Another wished to bind down all the Academicians by an oath only to employ words which had been formally sanctioned and accredited by a majority of the Academy. Vaugelas speaks of a certain company of courtiers who having met with the phrase *a present* in a work otherwise elegantly written, refused to read further because that expression was a sufficient proof of the bad taste of the author.¹ Even the most original and spontaneous writers of the French language, who deservedly rank high among its creators, thought themselves compelled to defer to this new philological dogmatism. Corneille, for instance, thus writes, 'I await with much impatience the opinions of the Academy in order to learn the rules I must follow for the future. As yet I can only work with mistrust, and I dare not employ with certainty one single word.'² So Balzac, writing to L'Huillier, sarcastically remarks: 'I *félicite* you on having M. de Roncierres as a governor . . . if the word *félicite* is not yet French it will become so next year, and M. de Vaugelas has promised me not to oppose it when we plead for its reception into the language.'³ I need not tell such admirers of Molière as you are how well the great dramatist castigates the extravagances into which a zeal for linguistic purity betrayed the fastidious and shallow-brained hangers-on to the skirts of French literature, though it requires some acquaintance with the linguistic controversies of the period to appreciate the full merits and significance, in this respect, of *Les Précieuses Ridicules*.

In his vigorous opposition to this pedantry and affectation, Le Vayer, I have admitted, did useful work. Skepticism, like ridicule, is an appropriate corrective of human folly, though both one and the other occasionally meddle with and travesty human wisdom. He not only opposed the extreme purists, but even those moderate men, of whom Vaugelas was chief, who endeavoured to steer midway between the extremes of dogmatism and exclusiveness on the one hand, and libertinism on the other. Vaugelas thought some standard of good taste necessary, and agreed with Horace that it should be the best usage. Even to these moderate and surely reasonable restrictions Le Vayer sturdily refused to conform.⁴ Language to him was

¹ Vaugelas, *Remarques sur la Langue Française*, quoted by Nisard, *Hist. de la Lit. Fran.*, ii. p. 210.

² Etienne, *Essai*, p. 139.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

⁴ Le Vayer replies to Vaugelas in his *Considerations sur l'Eloquence Française*. *Œuv.*, ii. pt. i. p. 189-318. Menage has observed that although Le Vayer wrote against Vaugelas, there is a considerable difference in the style of those of his works which were written before the publication of Vaugelas's book and those written subsequently. *Menagiana*, iii. p. 392.

the vehicle of thought. Its value was neither more nor less than the precise worth of the thought which it expressed. Eloquence he regarded, not as the best conceivable expression of the noblest conceptions and ideas, but as a spurious polish employed designedly to hide poverty of thought and lack of originality. He says that minds elevated above the common level will scorn to notice these finicking puerilities. He sarcastically recommends his adversaries to confine themselves to translations; for, as their defect lay in original conception, and they possessed an excellent elocution, they would then be able to apply their beautiful language to thoughts ready-made.¹ Le Vayer's Treatise on French Eloquence, though interesting, is too lengthy to pursue further. Its fundamental misconception is that thought and eloquence must necessarily exist apart; that skill in the employment of words implies a defect in the higher qualities of ratiocination and practical power; and the main purport of his reply is: 'The life is more than meat, and the body than raiment.' I will just give you one extract to show the linguistic niceties which were then debated with so much earnestness: 'If we are to believe these gentlemen,' says Le Vayer, 'God must no longer be *supplicated*, He must be content to be *prayed to*, since the word *supplicate* is improperly applied to Him. There must be no longer *sovereignty* in the world, because it sounds too harshly in their ears, which will only allow *sovereign power*. We must no longer speak of *veneration*, but only of *reverence*. Among them, to say *lequel*, *duquel*, *en regard*, *àpreté*, with an infinite number of other words in common use, is to use the tongue of Ancient Gaul.'²

But though we credit Le Vayer with a justifiable application of his skepticism in opposing these linguistic subtleties, we must not shut our eyes to the fact that the logical issue of his argument would be, here as elsewhere, excessive libertinism,³ an unbounded licence in the use of all grammatical rules and forms of speech, which would have rendered the language a very bear garden of anarchy and disorder, a realm in which every man might linguistically do that which seemed good in his own eyes.

I do not know that I need add more to this part of my subject. You will have seen that, broad as are Le Vayer's principles, his application of them is just as free and unrestrained, so far at least as theory is concerned. For every science he asserts and requires absolute freedom; not that he is at all disposed to push the liberty thus vindicated to practical excess. For just as his freedom in speculative ethics is very far from inducing licentiousness of conduct, so, notwithstanding his plea for complete liberty in the employment of his gram-

¹ *Œuv.*, ii. pt. i.² *Ibid.*, ii. pt. i. 211.³ Etienne, *Essai*, pp. 112 3.

mar and dictionary, he did not exceed the limits of a rather grave, prolix, and common-place style, as innocent of any striking waywardness or brilliant novelty as if he had imposed on it the most slavish restrictions.

III. Le Vayer's best service to modern culture is his advocacy of tolerance. This is only what we might expect. In my opinion he is sometimes open to the charge of pushing that virtue to the extreme of cynical indifference: though in his time intolerance was probably a greater evil than indifference. Throughout his voluminous writings he manifests the same genial sympathetic spirit for the science, culture and literature of every race that could claim these fruits of civilisation. But his principal work bearing directly on the study of tolerance is his well-known treatise *On the Virtue of the Heathen*. This, like so many others of his productions, was written at the suggestion of Cardinal Richelieu, as a counteractive to the narrow dogmatism of Jansenism. Both in its origin and purpose it is related to a work by Sirmond¹ on the *Defence of Virtue*, similarly inspired by the great minister. The interest which that astute politician and versatile genius took in a question which might seem purely theological is explicable on grounds of ordinary policy, without supposing him to be influenced by any motive so worthy as a desire for tolerance in and for itself. The subject suggested to Le Vayer, and his treatment of it might be partly ascribed to the predilection of the Cardinal for classical literature and its authors; but it was due in still greater measure to the common-place desire to subserve the dogmatic system of the Church. For, however reluctant the Western Church at previous periods of her history had generally been to recognise any merit in the words and lives of men outside the pale of Christianity, the Renaissance had introduced a somewhat better feeling in that respect, so far as the ancients were concerned. Both Pope Pius V. and Gregory XIII. had fulminated Bulls against the extreme position of Jansen's predecessor, Baius, that all 'the deeds of the heathen were only sins, and the virtues of the ancient philosophers only vices;' a position which Jansen, with most of his followers, reaffirmed. If the Bulls of the supreme Pontiff were ever justified it was surely on this occasion; for a proposition more narrow-minded, more repugnant to the spirit and teaching of Christ, more opposed to all rudimentary notions of justice, equity and truth, more abhorrent to the natural sentiment of our common humanity, it would be impossible to formulate. It imputed a harshness of judgment to God utterly irreconcilable with the Christian conception of Him as the

¹ This was P. Antoine Sirmond, the nephew of Père Sirmond, the king's confessor.

Father of all mankind. It established the pure accidents of a man's birth, position and education as momentous responsibilities. It dignified the extreme intolerance, the barbarous and inhuman cruelty, of Romish inquisitors, Parisian Sorbonnes, and Toulouse Parliaments, as a mind and temper akin to that of a holy and merciful God. It was a libel on the Divine attributes, an indelible stain on the government of the universe. No doubt from the standpoint of ecclesiastical exclusiveness the admission of Gentile teachers to a perfect equality with Christians would seem to be dangerous. If men could be finally saved without the life and teaching recorded in the Gospels, what need was there of that Revelation? If human Free-will sufficed to gain the good-will of the Eternal, of what use was Divine Grace? In effect this was a revivification of the old heresy of Pelagius against which the Church of the fourth century had victoriously struggled. The answer to the objections is to my mind easy, and we have already touched upon it in a previous chapter, *i.e.* the Christianity of the Gospels did not announce itself as a system so exclusive that no truth, virtue or excellence could exist outside of it. No attempt was made by Christ to divide the providence of God into two realms: one of Nature, the other of Grace. The natural sympathy of the Samaritan for the fallen wayfarer was a closer approach to the Spirit of Christ than the religious exclusiveness of Priest and Levite. Christ's great commandments were ostensibly and pointedly founded on laws already, in kind, existing in the world, and by which the most enlightened of the Gentiles had endeavoured to walk. The doctrine of the first being last and the last first was a distinct assertion of the impartiality of God. St. Paul only put the inevitable consequence of Christ's teaching in another form when he spoke of the Gentiles as being a law to themselves. Besides, it was not only the salvability of the Gentile world that was pronounced impossible by the teaching of Baius and his followers, pre-Christian Judaism was also involved in the same penalty. For even if it were alleged that the saints and prophets of the Old Testament foresaw and believed the essential dogmas of the Christian Church—an exceedingly doubtful proposition—it might be argued that this approximation to the speculative teachings of Christianity was not closer than the relation of the best heathen morality to its ethical precepts. Indeed, the doctrine which, consistently pursued, had the effect of condemning to eternal torments Abraham, Moses, Elijah, and Isaiah, was altogether self-condemned. It may be allowed that in the grotesque intermingling of heathen with Christian teaching effected by the Renaissance, some distinct assertion on behalf of the latter was imperative.¹ St. Vincent Ferrier

¹ Cf. Etienne, *Essai*, p. 120.

in one of his sermons exclaimed, 'Paul says, Preach the Gospel: he does not say Ovid or Virgil or Horace, but preach the Gospel.' . . . So far, no doubt, the preacher is justified, but when he proceeds: 'Preach the Gospel, because to preach the words of the damned is itself damnation: for Jerome says that Aristotle and Plato are in Hell,' we are made painfully cognisant of the peculiar nature of the evangel whose cause he pleads. Arnould's treatise on *The Necessity of Faith* is inspired by sentiments just as narrow and exclusive. On the other hand, the broader and more Catholic position which Le Vayer adopts in his *Virtue of the Heathen* had already been asserted by eminent writers both within and without the Church. A brief glance at a few of these prior thinkers will be an useful preliminary to the consideration of Le Vayer's book.

Aquinas's Catholic conception of Christianity as the development and perfection of natural religion, the seeds of which were implanted in the heart and conscience of all men, had the effect of making mankind generally sharers in its hopes. What was revealed in the Gospel was latent in Jewish patriarch and Pagan philosopher. Hence comes the distinction which we make between implicit and explicit faith, a distinction on which we shall find Le Vayer basing his plea for the extension of God's favour to pious and moral heathen. Aquinas's name was on this as on other points a tower of strength for liberal thinkers, and was of great service in opposing the reaction which followed the Reformation. And as his own generous sympathies, his comprehensive intellect, his widely varying studies were thus instinctively arrayed on the side of Christian tolerance, so was his powerful reasoning and immense authority a source of great disquiet to Jansenist leaders. St. Cyran complains in the genuine tone of pietistic Obscurantism, that the great Doctor 'reasoned too much.' He was no doubt as much opposed to the charity of his conclusions as to his employment of a faculty vitiated by the fall. Certainly no one in our own days could accuse Aquinas of extravagant liberality in his distribution of the Divine goodness, nor of indifference to the claims of the Christian Faith; for he expressly limits the effect of implicit faith to those who lived before the coming of Christ. Since that event, followed, as he says it was, by the preaching of the Gospel over the whole world, no qualification will serve to secure the Divine Favour here and hereafter except explicit faith, *i.e.* an open and avowed confession of Christianity.

Turning from the great prose expounder of mediæval theology to its chief poet, from Aquinas to Dante, we find the question influenced by the advancing tide of the Renaissance. In this movement the contact of Christianity with heathendom took place under circumstances

very dissimilar from those which governed their earlier connexion in the second and third centuries. Then it was Christianity—the thought and power of the Gospel—which overwhelmed the effete philosophy, the moral degradation of the later stages of the Roman Empire. Now, after some twelve centuries of existence and gradual deterioration, it was Papal Christianity that had become decrepid and demoralized, while the incoming tide of classical learning swept over it like a fresh, vigorous and life-giving flood. The subject of Dante's *Comœdia* brought before him with especial prominence the position of heathen in the future world. You will not need my reminding you how he decided the general question on the basis of a pure morality, without overmuch consideration for privileges supposed to be conferred by an explicit profession of Christianity. Thus Trajan has his abode in Paradise, Cato occupies the honourable post of guarding the entrance to Purgatory, while Virgil is the poet's venerated master and guide to the very gates of Paradise. On the other hand, popes are confined in some of the lower circles of Hell; and although Socrates, Aristotle and Plato are also located in the same region, evidently against the poet's will and in deference to dogmatic considerations,

‘Gran duol mi prese al cor, quando lo ’ntesi :
Perocchè gente di molto valore
Connobbi, che ’n quel Limbo eran sospesi.’

—*Infern.*, canto iv., l. 43–45.

they occupy a part to themselves which in reality is an abode of comparative peace and honour. Dante, like Le Vayer, advocates suspense in judging the future state of any individual. His heavenly spirits advise men :—

‘Evoi, mortali, Tenetevi stretti
A giudicar : che noi, che Dio vedemo,
Non conosciamo ancor tutti gli eletti.’¹

With his intense sympathies for heathen authors, he shows a personal interest in their fates. So he makes the pathetic appeal—

‘Solvete mi, spirando, il gran digiuno
Che lungamente m’ ha tenuto in fame
Non trovandoli in terra cibo alcuno.

* * * * *

Sapete, come attento io m’ apparecchio
Ad ascoltar : sapete quale è quello
Dubbio, che m’ è digiun cotanto vecchio.’²

‘The great fast, so long endured, and which no earthly food could satisfy—the doubt he was unable to solve—both refer to the lot of his beloved ancients. We may hence see how painfully the feelings of

¹ *Par.*, canto xx.

² *Par.*, canto xix.

Christian scholars in the middle ages were exercised by the contemplation, though but as a possibility, of illustrious heathen suffering eternal torments for demerits which they could neither have foreseen nor averted, and how vigorously the natural instincts of men, not to mention the sense which every Christian would have of the divine goodness, recalcitrated against such an infamous dogma. This repugnance was no doubt in direct proportion to the diffusion of knowledge and culture. The average monk in the cloister, engaged in his perpetual routine of ignorant and mechanical devotion, varied by occasional outbursts of sottishness and debauchery, could contemplate without pity the endless perdition of those of whom he only knew that they were not Christians and *ipso facto* worthy of damnation. Grand Inquisitors sentencing from time to time batches of unfortunate wretches to a cruel death for want of conformity to the Christian creed as they chose to interpret it, could regard without the least horror the eternal sufferings of others who were not partially but wholly infidels. But it was the scholar, the eager student of humane literature, men like Dante and Petrarca, who spent days and nights in the study of Aristotle and Cicero, Plutarch and Seneca, and who would gladly have sacrificed not a few of the wordy tomes of Schoolmen and Fathers for a single Dialogue of Plato, to whom the endless tortures of those leaders of humanity was an idea replete with horror and anguish. It was just as if they beheld frightful cruelties practised on close personal friends or near relatives, *e.g.* on a beloved father or brother; for these heathen writers stood in a more intimate mental relation to them than any Christian thinker or writer. The Church might possess their deference and its dogmas claim their faith, but it was ancient philosophy that received their fullest and warmest affections.

We are quite unable to realize this conflict between a cruel belief exacted by the Church and the human sympathy inspired by the sages of antiquity in the minds of mediæval scholars. In our time the secrets of the world beyond the grave are discreetly left in the fathomless mystery which so naturally and inevitably enshrouds them. The notion of a physical hell may now be said to have lost most of its power for cultured and spiritually-minded people; and we can read the *Dialogues* of Plato, the *Ethics* of Aristotle, the moralizings of Epictetus and Seneca, without the painful accompanying vista of the eternal tortures of the teachers of such noble doctrines. But in those days hell-fire—torments grossly material and undoubtedly perpetual—was the main dogma of unscrupulous ecclesiastics. It was the potent wand of monkish alchymists and sorcerers which could extract gold from the reluctant hand of the miser, terror

from the heart of the bravest, and a mock religion from the most impenitent transgressor. The frightful and disgusting pictures of hell which still defile the walls of Italian churches were then an ever-present fact to the popular consciousness, and shed a lurid reflected glare over the pages of every heathen writing, no matter how great its intrinsic merits or how close the assimilation of its teachings to those of the Gospel. No doubt these forbidden studies occasionally carried with them a remedy for such groundless delusions. The breadth of view which they imparted; the enlarged knowledge of excellences and virtues not specifically Christian, yet sharing its highest qualities; the conviction hence arising of God's impartiality, and the improbability, to say the least, of such an absolute distinction in His dealings towards Christians and heathens as the former were inclined to assert; were considerations which modified considerably hopeless misgivings as to the final lot of virtuous heathens. How great those misgivings were in certain minds the example of Dante clearly demonstrates, and if his powerful intellect was unable to suppress them, it was not likely, unless they were less dominated by purely theological considerations, that inferior minds would succeed in the attempt. Of the ordinary common-sense arguments which were opposed to the dogma of the eternal misery of all non-Christians, Dante was fully aware; he describes them in words of which Voltaire's reasoning on the same point are only a faint echo:—

‘ Un uom nasce alla riva
Dell’ Indo, e quivi non è chi ragioni
Di Cristo, nè chi legga, nè chi scriva
E tutti i suoi voleri ed atti buoni
Sono, quanto ragione umana vede,
Senza peccato in vita, o in sermoni:
Muore non battezzato e senza fede;
Ov’ è questa giustizia,¹ che ’l condanna?
Ov’ è la colpa sua, s’ egli non crede?’²

¹ Pascal's answer to this question may be worth recalling: ‘Car il est sans doute qu’il n’y a rien qui choque plus notre raison que de dire que le péché du premier homme ait rendu coupables ceux qui, étant si éloignés de cette source, semblent incapables d’y participer . . . car qu’y a-t-il de plus contraire aux règles de notre misérable justice que de damner éternellement un enfant incapable de volonté, pour un péché . . . commis six mille ans avant qu’il fût en être.—*Pens.*, ed. Havet, i. p. 115. Still the epithet ‘miserable’ shows that Pascal was content to waive the humane for the dogmatic conception, it would be a prostitution of ethical language to call the latter, as Pascal does, *Divine Justice*. Another extract from the *Pensées* will serve to show Pascal's mind on the salvability of the heathen: ‘Vocation des gentils par Jésus-Christ. *Ruine des Juifs et des païens par Jesus Christ.*’—*Pens.*, Hav., ii. 198.

² *Par.*, canto xix.

. . . questions, which on the hypothesis of justice as an essential element in Divine Providence, are themselves their own best answer; but to which Dante's eagle spirit replies by a poetical paraphrase of St. Paul's: 'Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God'? A better solution, if not of this, yet of similar mysteries, Dante gives us in a prior passage, in which the limitation of human knowledge is asserted not from a skeptical but from a religious point of view—

'. . . Colui, che volse il sesto
Allo stremo del mondo, e dentro ad esso
Distinse tanto occulto e manifesto
Non poteo suo valor sì fare impresso
In tutto l' universo, che 'l suo verbo
Non rimanesse in infinito eccesso.'¹

Nor are the more liberal thinkers on this subject confined to Catholics. Le Vayer refers to the great Swiss reformer Zwingli and his nobly tolerant sentiments as to the possessors of future bliss. One of the last works of this eminent thinker, who undoubtedly came much nearer to the simplicity and charity of the Gospel than his great rival Luther, was an exposition of the Christian faith addressed to Francis I. In this occurs a passage instinct with Christian hope and love, and of glowing eloquence, describing what that monarch might expect to behold in heaven. 'There you may hope to see the fellowship, the communion and society of all holy, prudent, faithful, constant, brave and virtuous men who have ever existed from the beginning of the world. Here you will see the two Adams, redeemed and Redeemer; here Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Samuel, Phineas, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah and the God-bearing virgin of whom he prophesied; David, Hezekiah, Josiah, the Baptist, Peter and Paul; here you will behold Herkules, Theseus, Sokrates, Aristides, Antigonus, Numa, Camillus, the Catos and the Scipios; here, Louis the Picus and your own ancestors, the Louises, Philips, Pepins, and so many of your forefathers as have departed hence in the faith. In a word, no good man has ever existed, nor shall there exist a holy mind, a faithful soul, from the very foundation of the world to its consummation, whom you will not see there with God. What more joyous than such a spectacle, what more delightful, what, in short, more honourable can even be imagined? What more reasonable than that we should expend all the energies of our soul on the attainment of such a life?'² Words to which the verdict might fitly be appended—the

¹ *Par.*, canto xix. l. 40–45.

² *Zwingli Opera*, ed. Schzzler et Schultess, iv. p. 65.

Apocalyptic vision of a generous and Catholic-minded Christian. Zwingli would have made heaven as nobly broad and inclusive as the all-embracing nature of the Divine love. With a magnificent disdain of religious distinctions, ecclesiastical dogmas and partition walls, sectarian animosities and jealousies, he conceived it as the abode of 'whatever things were true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report.' At first sight the examples selected to illustrate heathen virtues appear, with our present extended knowledge of pagan antiquity, somewhat strangely assorted. But in Zwingli's time each of these personages was not only credited with a real personality, but was the recognized exponent of some vigorous moral teaching or conduct. The selection indeed points to the strong moral fibre interwoven into his own character, which serves to explain his estimate of others, and forms the clue both to his doctrine and conduct.¹

Poor Zwingli! The charity that 'hopeth all things,' which he was willing to extend to human excellencies of whatever kind was meted to him in but scanty measure. For an excess of liberality which appeared profane because it started from natural justice rather than from dogmatic Christianity, he was vehemently denounced both by Romanists and Reformers. Bossuet expostulated in his own eloquent thunder² with the attempt to place Jesus Christ on the level of heathen gods and demi-gods, idolaters and suicides. Luther said Zwingli had become a pagan, for that he put heathens, idolaters and Epicureans in the ranks of the blessed. The former denounced him as a Pelagian—the greatest since the apostate Julian; the latter, with cynical cruelty, considering the nature of Zwingli's offence, despaired of his salvation, and so denied him admission to that Paradise whose gates he himself had set so wide open.³ We may however console ourselves with the reflection that it was only Luther's heaven from which his brother Reformer was excluded, not the abode of all goodness which his own large-hearted charity and warm imagination had conceived. Their respective ideals of the future world varied as their opinions of the conditions requisite for attaining it. Zwingli's was, in brief, a moral, Luther's an ecclesiastical heaven. The conditions of the former were mostly practice of the latter chiefly belief.

¹ Readers of Epictetus will not need to be told of the rôle which such a mythological personage as Herakles played in the writings of the Stoic moralists. The germ of the conception is probably due to Prodikus. *Comp. Evenings with the Skeptics, Greek Skepticism*, series i., vol. i. p. 161.

² 'Histoire de Variations,' etc., chap. ii., *Œuv. Comp.*, viii. p. 32.

³ Bossuet, loc. cit., p. 33.

Le Vayer possibly derived from Montaigne the stress he placed on one particular example of heathen virtue, *i.e.* the Emperor Julian. As you know, he was the character among all eminent pagans whom the essayist most admired. Leaving his apostasy, which he does not mention in terms of excessive indignation, but is inclined to class among several other mistakes on the subject-matter of religion, he regards him as one of the noblest characters of antiquity: a type of the pure, unselfish, virtuous, self-reliant Stoic philosopher taken at its best. Montaigne's vindication of this traditional arch-enemy of the Church¹ was so warm that the Roman officials to whom he submitted his Essays for approval suggested some qualification of the eulogium, but left the point to his conscience. His conscience however refused to take the hint. Julian is similarly a pet example with Le Vayer of 'the virtue of the heathen,' and thereby the occasion of similar suspicions. The subject had come before him in one of his earliest works—the *Instruction of the Prince*. Le Vayer had there insisted on the virtues and talents of the great Apostate, placed him in the foremost rank of the generals of antiquity, and added that only his apostasy prevented his being the first of the Cæsars. Our skeptic was hence accused of collecting the ashes of Julian in order to consecrate them, of erecting altars to an apostate. The article 'Julian' in the second part of *The Virtue of the Heathen*, is in some measure a reply to these accusations. Le Vayer, with more deference to ecclesiastical authority than Montaigne cared to evince, toned down his *Panegyric* at least to the extent of refusing to place the Apostate above the Christian emperors. As you are aware, Montaigne and Le Vayer are not the only free-thinkers who have taken Julian into their protection. He is the favourite, and not wholly unworthy example to the English deists, French philosophers and encyclopædists of the eighteenth century, of virtue flourishing apart from and independent of religion. His position in the future world has ever been a fruitful theme of discussion among theologians. Nor is this community of interest surprising. Having abjured Christianity in the not over-inviting form in which it was presented for his acceptance, and at the same time insisted on the punctilious performance of every moral duty, Julian had become a typical example of non-Christian virtue.

'Perplexed in faith but pure in deeds,'

he had renounced not so much the substance as the form which Jesus Christ's teaching had assumed in the fourth century. The eternal fate of such a man, could it be determined, would be a crucial test of

¹ Montaigne, *Essais*, ii. ch. xix.

the special qualifications needed to enjoy the favour of God. Would it be too hazardous to apply as the proximate decision of 'the Master' on the question: 'Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord! Lord! shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven'?

Coming now to Le Vayer's treatment of the subject, which I hope my rather long review of the manner in which preceding writers of different schools had handled it, will be found to illustrate, we find that his *Virtue of the Heathen* is more methodical than most of his writings. It is divided into two parts, of which the first is taken up with general considerations on the three states of humanity, viz. i. Nature, ii. The Law (Judaism), iii. Grace (Christianity); the second part being devoted to a specific examination of those leaders of ancient thought who came up most nearly to the level of Christianity. After a brief preliminary enquiry into the nature of virtue and its various definitions, he commences with the chief ecclesiastical authorities. Gregory of Rimini was one of the first to maintain that an infidel could never be virtuous, because his infidelity hindered the production of good actions¹—a sentiment which could only have originated in a profound ignorance of antiquity. With Augustine, Le Vayer has to face the stern and exclusive dogma from which Baius and the Jansenists derived their inspiration, he has to meet the *horribile decretum* that the virtues of unbelievers (non-Christians) are only vices, and their best actions but veritable sins. He tries to accomplish this by adducing certain passages principally from *The City of God*, in which the deeds of the heathen are declared praiseworthy and worthy of imitation, though in relation to God they are but bastard virtues, and their utmost deserts extend only to temporal rewards, not to the final blessedness in store for Christians. He takes especial note of Augustine's remark that Virtue is the love of God; whence we may conclude, says Le Vayer, that the man who pursues virtue for its own sake pursues it for the love of God,² a deduction no doubt both logical and charitable, but it is not Augustine's. But in truth the dogmatic narrowness of the great Latin Father is a source of great inquietude to our skeptic. After all the passages he is able to produce which seem inclined to recognize a virtue and excellence independent of Christianity, he is fully aware that these expressions of charity are mere *obiter dicta*, and as purely accidental as in Augustine's own belief were the virtues of unbelievers themselves. Le Vayer also recognizes the fact that a direct

¹ *Euv.*, v. pt. i. p. 3.

² Upon this argument Père Antoine Sirmond based his defence of heathen virtue. See below.

acknowledgment of heathen excellencies would have been in diametrical opposition to his doctrinal system. To counteract therefore the tendencies of his rigid and cruel dogmatism, and to impair its authority, he appeals to his *Retractations* as a proof that Augustine could never have considered himself infallible, though he carefully avoids noticing the nature of the opinions withdrawn in that work. He also adduces a remark of Jerome, the other great luminary of Latin Christianity, that men might do wise and holy things who were not Christians.¹ But our author evidently feels that the tolerance which can by any force be extracted from the works of Augustine and Jerome is small in quantity and doubtful in quality, while the process of extraction is laborious, and analogous to the operation of drawing blood from a stone. But the enormous and mischievous influence of the former Father, both at Geneva and among the Jansenists, left Le Vayer no option but to consider his writings, and to make the best of whatever precarious support they might be forced to furnish to his side of the controversy.

Among the Greek Fathers, on the other hand, Le Vayer finds outspoken testimony on behalf of his Gentile clients. Justin Martyr, Clemens Alexandrinus, Basil and Chrysostom are worthy representatives in Christianity of a language and literature, the noblest, freest and most humane in the world. The works of these Fathers, especially the first two, prove that the innate freedom of the Greek was not so readily subjugated by the growing ecclesiasticism of Christianity as the narrower and harsher instincts of the Latin. Minds inspired by and dieted on Homer and Hesiod, Æschylus and Sophokles, Aristotle and Plato, could ill brook both the limitation and induration of excessive dogma. The genial and sympathetic nature of their feelings was averse to severity and inhumanity, while the full comprehensive character of their intellect enabled them to take a wide and varied survey of every truth presented to them, and made them suspicious and impatient of one single aspect or point of view. Here, therefore, our skeptic found numerous passages fitted for his purpose, and abundantly sufficient to prove that the Virtue of the Heathen was a belief which though not formulated in a creed was accepted as an unquestionable truth by the best educated section of the early Christian Church. For his purpose, Justin Martyr with his well-known extension of the *Logos*, which I have already alluded to, to all pious and virtuous heathen, was a host in himself. Clemens Alexandrinus, with his opinion that Greek philosophy was a propædæutik to Christianity, was of scarcely less value. Among these

¹ *Œuv.*, v. pt. i. p. 10.

writers there was no unseemly jealousy as to the sharing of the Divine goodness by humanity at large;¹ no attempt to sentence Sokrates to eternal damnation because he was a native of Athens four centuries B.C., instead of a dweller in Palestine thirty-three years A.D.; no desire to establish a new abode² in the future world somewhere between hell and purgatory, for the especial behoof of virtuous heathen and with a due regard, as well, to the strict and exclusive privileges of professing Christians. Le Vayer notices that the root-thought which dictated these charitable judgments of the Greek Fathers was the simple conviction of the Divine goodness and justice—a principle, I may add, quite powerful enough to settle the point in every case where bigotry and dogmatic bias were not preponderating influences.

But although our author has recourse to every authority, Greek or Latin, which may subserve his purpose, the main stress of his argument is placed on Thomas Aquinas. What the opinions of this renowned Doctor on the question of the salvability of the heathen were, we have already seen. Le Vayer quotes a number of passages from his *Summa* which show his reluctance to limit Divine goodness and equity by human accidents. He adopts his distinction of implicit and explicit faith as imparting a flavour of Christianity—a kind of private baptism—to deeds and lives nominally outside its limits. That the effect of this distinction ceased with the first promulgation of the Gospel, Le Vayer will not allow; not because he disputes the texts on which Aquinas relied, and which assert that the Gospel was preached in 'the whole world,' but because since those texts were written the dimensions of the known world had become much enlarged, notably by the discovery of the new and well-peopled continent of America.³ Le Vayer is persuaded that if Aquinas were alive in the seventeenth century he would have adopted some method of including all those heathen races within the compass of the Divine love and protection, perhaps by removing the limit assigned to the

¹ Op. cit., pp. 26–33.

² This was attempted by a certain Archbishop Seyssel. See op. cit., p. 26. Of this mode of settling the question Le Vayer remarks: 'Il faut prendre garde en theologie qu'en philosophie de ne pas multiplier les êtres sans nécessité.'

³ Cf. Dryden, *Religio Laici*:—

'Tis said the sound of a Messiah's birth
Is gone through all the habitable earth,
But still that text must be confined alone
To what was then inhabited and known,
And what provision could from thence accrue,
To Indian souls, and worlds discovered new?'

efficacy of implicit faith.¹ But with all his liberal tendencies, Le Vayer sometimes argues with what we should regard an excess of caution. He indeed allows that heathens possessed not only moral and intellectual, but also theological virtues,² *i.e.* Faith, Hope and Charity; but those possessions do not seem to have much availed them, for he more than once intimates his own belief that the majority of heathen disbelievers were consigned to eternal perdition.³

The second part of *The Virtue of the Heathen* is only the confirmation by induction of particular instances of the principles laid down in the first. He passes in review the following leaders of thought in the ancient world: Sokrates, Plato, Aristotle, Diogenes, Zeno, Pythagoras, Epikourus, Pyrrhon, Confucius, Seneca and Julian. Of all these he adduces whatsoever good report he can collect throughout the whole of ancient literature, and touches lightly on evidence capable of an opposite construction. He returns from his investigation, like the spies from the Promised Land, with some abnormal bunches of grapes. To characters already high in human estimation he adds a little additional colouring, while he endeavours to rehabilitate the doubtful, *e.g.* Diogenes and Epikourus. At the same time he does not attempt to make them absolutely perfect or impeccable, nor does he exaggerate their excellencies at the expense of Christian virtues. He is never forgetful of his customary caution, or that his book is dedicated to a cardinal of the Romish Church, and the tacit conclusion after the enumeration of heathen virtues in every instance is, 'He that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.'

His treatment of Sokrates⁴ is an illustration of these liberal promptings and warm sympathies held in check by considerations of expediency. Of his martyrdom, *e.g.* he says there can be little difference in suffering for the unity of God in the law of nature, and enduring martyrdom for the faith of Christ under the law of grace. He is therefore inclined to call Sokrates the proto-martyr of the Christ expected, as Stephen was the proto-martyr of the Christ come. On the other hand he deprecates over-laudation, or placing a thinker who, with all his excellencies, was only a heathen, on the same level with a Christian saint. He takes Erasmus, *e.g.* to task for saying that as often as he perused the narrative of Sokrates' martyrdom he could hardly forbear crying out, '*O Sancte Sokrates ora pro nobis.*'

¹ *Œuv.*, v. pt. i. p. 90.

² *Ibid.*, p. 95, Note T.

³ Le Vayer especially mentions Pyrrhonists (*i.e.*, negative dogmatists) as those for whom there could be no hope. *Vertu des Païens*, *Œuv. Ibid.*, p. 94. Bayle, with his greater catholicity, sneers at him for this. *Dict.*, Art. 'Pyrrhon,' Note C.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 109.

He will not even permit the distinct assertion that Sokrates is among the blessed. He thinks it rash to affirm anything positively on the subject; at the same time it is much more rash, and to the rashness is superadded a want of charity, to pronounce his eternal perdition. His mood on the point is his favourite grammatical one—the conditional. He would perhaps have said with Dryden:—

‘Then those who followed Reason’s dictates right
Lived up, and lifted high her natural light,
With Sokrates *may* see their Maker’s face,
While thousand rubric martyrs want a place,’¹

if we may assume, as is probable, that the poet intended the *may* to refer to Sokrates as well as his rationalist companions. Le Vayer’s summing up of the merits of Sokrates is not without eloquence. He speaks of his deserts, before the Divine goodness, in establishing among men a part of philosophy so useful as morality. What love of virtue, what horror of vice has he not inspired in minds of every class; and how many crimes may we say that he has prevented by the principles and rules of the noble science he has left us. If the punishment and demerit of a heresiarch be estimated by the positive harm his bad teaching occasions (which I may say in parenthesis it generally is not), then the recompense of a good teacher like Sokrates should be similarly meted by the great utility of his lessons, the measures of which Le Vayer deduces from the fact that those teachings are confessedly valuable even in the present day.

But, as I have said, notwithstanding his reasoning, and the direction in which it points, our Pyrrhonist refuses to pronounce on the eternal beatitude of Sokrates or any other pagan teacher. He conducts us to the verge of some explicit declaration, but there he abruptly leaves us. All his heathen protégées are finally left, like so many Mahomet’s coffins, suspended midway between earth and heaven.

These few paragraphs will suffice to indicate Le Vayer’s method in the second part of his work. Each example of heathen wisdom is treated in a similar fashion. His starting-point and his conclusion are the same in each case, and the only variety is due to difference in the subject-matter. The article on Pyrrhon is more remarkable than the rest, as containing in a pleasing and succinct form the summary of our author’s philosophy.

The *Virtue of the Heathen* seems to me to present Le Vayer in a more favourable aspect than any other of his works. In most of them he comes before us as a skeptic freighted with uncertainty and

¹ Dryden, *Religio Laici*.

sophistry. In a few he is too cynical, treating principles of religious truth and morality with a cold contempt, which I am persuaded he was far from feeling. Here he is the tolerant sympathetic philosopher, pleading so far and so boldly as he dare for human goodness in and for itself, without distinction of creed, age, or country. The hardships and restrictions under which a plea for tolerance suffered in those days is partly shown by Le Vayer's caution. He dared not plead, as Zwingli did, and as a liberal thinker of our time undoubtedly would do, for a free admission of every virtuous man to a place in heaven. By a mischievous and mistaken dogma the Church had virtually negatived such a plea. All Le Vayer therefore contends for is an arrest of judgment; all he urges is the limitation of knowledge which makes it impossible to pronounce in any specific case on the final destiny of virtuous heathen. As to the fate of those—an enormous majority—who have lived and died in idolatry and immorality, Le Vayer has no doubt they are eternally doomed. The degree of their morality constitutes the standard of their merit. He thinks a moral life affords in every case a fair presumption of the possession of God's grace in its ordinary manifestation; and to those who possess it in that form he believes God will impart the extraordinary grace necessary to salvation. (The distinction may remind us that we are approaching the time of Pascal and the Provincials.) He professes therefore to find a *via media* which shall avoid, as equally dangerous, the indiscriminate bounty which would open the gates of Paradise to Cain and the devil, and the extreme harshness which would exclude all non-Christians, however worthy, from a share in the divine goodness,—a middle position between the antinomies of Grace and free will, which, without limiting God's justice or the natural liberty of man, might steer clear of Pelagianism. This medium position harmonizes with his Pyrrhonic philosophy and his dislike to extremes. It is moreover analogous to the curious commixture of good and evil, of vice and virtue which exists in the world. Le Vayer points out that this ethical entanglement is sometimes so great that extreme opposites are found united in the same character. Virtues are in fact rather the absence of vices than positive entities existing of and by themselves.¹

The argument is throughout conducted with considerable skill. His erudition does not here, as in some of his other works, threaten to overwhelm his ratiocination. True, he sometimes falls into mistakes from which greater critical discrimination would have saved him. His treatment of authorities is vague and unsatisfactory. Legen-

¹ *Œuv.*, v. pt. 1, pp. 103, 104.

dary and mythical history is often appealed to for argumentative support. Occasionally, too, his reasons are frivolous and beside the question. On the other hand, his argument sometimes rises to the dignity of eloquence and genuine human pathos. For example, he supposes the case of a 'pious Gentile,' a parallel to Dante's—

'Un uom nasce alla riva
Dell' Indo'

already quoted, dying immediately after an act of repentance and devotion. 'Let us imagine one who in the rectitude imparted by the law of nature, is induced solely by the light of reason, just as were those ancient philosophers of Greece, and even of Scythia, to acknowledge one only Creator of all things. I can suppose him on his knees, with arms crossed toward heaven, using some such prayer as this, in profound sorrow for the ill he may have done:—"Oh my God, who knowest the great secret of my soul, I implore Thy mercy and beseech Thee to lead me to the end for which Thou hast made me. If I possessed enough light to reach it of myself, there is nothing I would not do to attain it, and to please Thy Divine Majesty, which I revere with the profoundest humility. Pardon my ignorance and make me understand Thy holy wishes, so that I may obey with all my power those Thou hast given me, for I would rather die than do anything displeasing to Thee. . . ." Suppose it happened that immediately after that act of contrition the poor Gentile chanced to die, whether by some internal malady, or by some accident from without. Shall we judge him damned?'¹ . . . 'Yes!' would be the reply of Augustine, echoed by most of the Latin Fathers. 'Yes!' would be the answer of Calvinists and Jansenists, on the one hand, and the Council of Trent on the other. . . . 'Certainly' would be in short the unanimous verdict of the whole tribe of dogmatists. 'Certainly not' is the suggested but unexpressed answer of Le Vayer. He claims as one ground of decision in the question, the opinion of eminent Doctors, that God—the freest of all free agents—cannot be bound down by external symbols of sacraments, so that He is unable to accept a man without their aid. You will notice that Le Vayer's caution, and fear of offending ecclesiastical authorities, has led him to assess the religious attainments of his 'poor Gentile' at a high standard. Christians may surely hope that a consciousness of God somewhat less distinct, feelings of dependence less marked, and repentance less perfect, would not have been disdained by the universal Father. The dogma which could conclude the eternal misery of a man whose life was

¹ *Æur.*, v. pt. 1, p. 89.

moulded by the spirit of that prayer, and who died with its devout petitions on his lips, is itself irremediably self-condemned. Even utter ignorance of God, idolatrous worship and immoral practice among those who had never an opportunity of knowing better, could still plead the excuse so fully allowed by Christ in the parable, 'No man hath hired us.' Of no less truth and beauty than his prayer of the 'poor Gentile' is Le Vayer's plea for the difficulties of exemplary heathens in preserving their life and religion from the evil influences by which they were surrounded. If they succeeded their success was not less marvellous than the course of the River Alpheius, which is said to preserve its own current even after entering the sea, or like those fresh and potable springs described by Herodotus which issue from hills of salt in the deserts of Libya.¹

The *Virtue of the Heathen* forms part of a large controversy into which we must not enter. Ostensibly undertaken as a protest against Jansenism and its illiberal dogmas, it may be said to have subserved the interests of the cultured and moderate section of the Romish Church. The book was of course a compromise. Its author was a Pyrrhonist, and its main conclusion suspense. As such it failed to conciliate extreme partisans on either side.² Le Vayer's Catholic friends endeavoured to procure some modification of passages and illustrations in which his pagan leanings were too distinctly obtruded. You may have noticed, *e.g.*, that he compares Sokrates to Stephen as a Proto-martyr—certainly a venial error when contrasted with the numberless occasions in modern times in which the death of the Athenian sage is paralleled with the great tragedy of Calvary; but the juxtaposition was offensive to some of his friends, and Le Vayer had to explain and limit his meaning by a long note. On the other hand, the Jansenists put forward Arnould, the learned but bigoted author of the *Necessity of the Faith*, to reply both to Le Vayer's work and to Sirmond's *Defence of Virtue*. But whether or not we accept the attacks of extreme dogmatists as a proof of the utility of the work, as well as a fair presumption of its truth, we cannot deny its opportune appearance. Chronologically placed between the Massacres of St. Bartholomew, the Dragonnades of Louis XIV. and the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, any plea

¹ Op. cit., p. 107.

² This was probably the reason why the book was not a literary success. The publisher is said to have complained to Le Vayer of the slowness of the sale. 'Oh, don't trouble yourself,' was the author's reply. 'I know a way to make it sell.' He forthwith proceeded to request the ecclesiastical authorities to prohibit the reading of the book. No sooner did the prohibition become known than the sale of the book increased, and the edition was soon exhausted.—M. Louvet in *Nouvelle Biog. Generale*, Art. 'La Mothe-le-Vayer.'

for toleration could hardly be deemed unnecessary. In one respect Le Vayer's argument might be said to overshoot the mark. Not only were the virtue and salvability of heathen called in question, but those of Christians were equally endangered. The salvation which Calvinists and Jansenists denied to Sokrates and Aristides, was refused to themselves by extreme Romanists. If therefore Le Vayer's treatise afforded a presumption of the eternal blessedness of the heathen, it tended to establish *a fortiori* that of Huguenot, or non-Romanist Christians. We are not of course to expect that Jansenists would have been favourably affected towards Le Vayer's book by this consideration, even if it had occurred to them. To the genuine bigot any kind of intolerance is preferable to toleration. Zealots may and frequently have changed the form of their bigotry, but that a tolerant and liberal-minded man should become an arrant bigot is considerably less likely.

Besides the significance of Le Vayer's book on current controversies, it has a bearing also on his own opinions and predilections. (1) He is the successor of Charron in claiming for morality an intrinsic value of its own, and an independence of the ecclesiastical Christianity which had become alienated from it. In his assertion of the absolute sovereignty of morality, Le Vayer is by no means so outspoken as his master; still the *Virtue of the Heathen* carries on and applies the principles which we saw asserted in the *Sagesse*. Christianity, the Divine parent of morality (as distinguished from its human authority), had in process of time become changed, and now enacted the part of step-mother, who treated it with cruel indifference, and virtually turned it out of doors. Charron and Le Vayer took the outcast under their protection, and did their utmost to secure it a home and an establishment of its own. Besides, Le Vayer had a real personal interest in the moral worth and salvability of the heathen. Though by birth and circumstances a Christian, he was by education and sympathies a semi-Pagan.¹ He found more points of contact and intellectual *rapprochement* in the works of Plato and Aristotle, Plutarch and Seneca, than in the writers of the Old and New Testament. While therefore his learning and sympathies were enlisted in the defence of heathen morality, he was in reality vindicating the basis of his own.

I have, I fear, somewhat unduly extended my remarks on this

¹ This he himself admits. 'Quelquefois,' he says, 'je prends la licence de faire venir l'Italien ou l'Espagnol au secours du Grec et du Latin; mais je veux philosopher en philosophe ancien et païen, *in puris naturalibus*; je veux m'adresser à mes amis philosophes et non à un grand public.'—*Lettre de l'Auteur*, prefixed to *Orasius Tubero*.

work of Le Vayer's. My apology must be, (i.) my own intense sympathy with every attempt to inculcate tolerance, not merely as an expediency suggested by the natural constitution and workings of the human mind, and its inherent repugnance to all extraneous compulsion; still less as an outcome of skepticism; but as a principle distinctly related to and taught by Christianity in its pure form; (ii.) my conviction that the *Virtue of the Heathen* is in reality the most valuable part of Le Vayer's intellectual labours: the domain in which his learning, his charity, and his comprehensiveness have been most beneficially manifested. Even M. Etienne, who from his point of view of a liberal but orthodox Romanism is by no means uniformly favourable to him, admits that in this instance Le Vayer has approved himself a genuine philosopher who worthily vindicated the claims both of philosophy and religion.¹

To conclude. All skepticism is, I conceive, heterogeneous in its methods. Opposing itself to convictions which, however originated, have become instinctive to the majority of men, it is compelled to have recourse to arguments and instruments as multifarious as the contents and operations of the human mind. Still there are degrees in this irregularity; for it varies in proportion to the systematic power, simple directness, and mental acuteness of the individual skeptic. The multiform character of Le Vayer's skepticism has, I hope, sufficiently appeared in the course of my remarks. He is, *par excellence*, the eclectic of Unbelief, utterly devoid of argumentative principle, borrowing reasons from every available source and massing them together without method or order. This fact makes it somewhat difficult to classify him. You might just as well try to bring one of those monsters, composed by the fertile imagination of ancient poets of a dozen incoherent properties, taken from as many different species of living beings, under the category of one distinct class. The utmost we can attempt under the circumstances is a proximate determination. We must seize the most strongly marked or most important characteristic, and arrange the others as far as possible in orderly subordination to it. Treating Le Vayer in this way, we find that his philosophy is Pyrrhonism, qualified by Academic skepticism, and in the interests of religion by two-fold truth, professing moreover as secondary elements most of the other methods and arguments of modern skepticism. He calls himself a Christian skeptic, a designation which I confess I dislike, though in his case it is appropriate, if we may take it as implying a subordination of his Christianity to his skepticism. He clearly cannot seriously mean that he intended his unbelief as a preparation for

¹ *Essai*, p. 131.

Christian dogma, as did Huet and Pascal, who might therefore in contrast with Le Vayer be called 'Skeptical Christians.' For though the latter professes frequently to except the dogmas of the Church from the operation of his skeptical analysis, it is impossible to attach much weight to these professions. There is no hint that he intended his skepticism as a foundation for theology; no instance of a direct application of his Pyrrhonism to subserve the cause of ecclesiastical creeds. The main object of Le Vayer's teaching, its sole object as regards himself, is simply Ataraxia. As Bartholmèss well remarks:¹ 'With Le Vayer the religious purpose of skepticism does not preponderate. Not only in the last of the Five Dialogues,² wherein he considers the diversity of religions, is he utterly careless of the interests of the Church, but, in his numerous treatises and essays, his main desire is "to turn skeptically all medals in order to see their other side." Doubt is with him at once the method and the conclusion.' What I think he meant by his self-conferred appellation of Christian skeptic was, that he was a Christian as well as a skeptic—the first in religion, the second in philosophy—that he had discovered the means of reconciling the old foes,³ or in view of their coincidence in his own personality, that Christianity had in it necessarily skeptical elements. His contention on this point is a marked feature of his teachings. He makes a rigid distinction in nature and operation between Faith and Knowledge. This does not mean, as it did with Huet of Avranches, that the weakness of Reason might be assigned as a pretext for delivering her over bound and blinded to serve the interests of Faith, nor again that their separation might be regarded as different stages of the same mental process.⁴ With Le Vayer the provinces are as distinct as two different nationalities, each with its separate laws and government. Christianity has its own certainty called Faith, which is attained by simple religious intuition. Secular knowledge being dependent on Reason can only attain to uncertainty, or to a probability, which is in truth but another name for it. But we must not suppose that religious conviction amounts to complete certainty. The certainty of religion consists of Faith, and Faith has no sort of relation with demonstrative certainty, indeed it is the principle most opposed to it. For once Knowledge is assumed, there is no further room nor use for Faith, just as hope vanishes when fruition takes its place.

Thus though Reason and Faith belong to different spheres of human

¹ Huet, p. 181.

² *I.e.* vol. i. of *Orasius Tubero*.

³ Comp. '*Le Prose Chagrine*,' *Œuv.*, iii. pt. 1, p. 308.

⁴ Comp. *Soliloques Sceptiques* (ed. Liseux), p. 15.

thought, they agree in the uncertainty which is the common issue of both their operations. Faith is uncertain naturally by the fact of being an inferior substitute for sight. Reason is uncertain by means of the inevitable weakness and limitation of sight. The former is a name of emotional, the latter of intellectual probability. Are we then to reject Faith and Reason? No, answers Le Vayer. Although defective, they are the only certainties in our power.¹ Absolute or demonstrative truth has no existence for us. To enforce his argument on the skeptical elements necessarily contained in religious faith, Le Vayer appeals to Scripture. His main authorities are Ecclesiastes and St. Paul. The great apostle he places indeed on the level of Sextus Empirikus by saluting him as 'our beloved skeptic.' The passages employed to justify this startling designation are St. Paul's well-known disclaimers of knowledge, fleshly wisdom, and general propositions such as: 'If any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know,' etc. The Pauline distinction between faith, and sight in the sense of knowledge, is also made use of. On this point he quotes more than once Cardinal Cajetan's *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, which insists on that distinction in relation to the doctrine of Immortality.² Aquinas's saying, that human reason and external evidences, as *e.g.* miracles, detract from the value of faith, is also utilized. He accepts the famous text, 'The just shall live by faith,' as a definition of skeptical Ataraxia — the calm consciousness of a knowledge inferior to human certitude, and a pious acquiescence in that ignorance.³ He allows, however, that Faith may occasionally present itself in a concentrated form sufficient to overpower every kind of doubt.⁴ This appears to be what he means by grace regarded as an unconditional half-miraculous intuition. You will remember, *e.g.*, the passage in which he speaks of the need of grace to pilot us through

¹ *Orasius Tubero*, ii. p. 105. Also referred to by Le Vayer in his *Discours Chrétien de l'Immort. de l'Ame.*—*Œuv.*, iii. pt. 1, p. 471.

² *Comp. Œuv.*, vi. pt. 2, p. 96. 'Avouons-le franchement, il n'y a que les vérités révélées, comme sont celles de nôtre eroiance': (the limited scope of Le Vayer's *faith* is to be borne in mind in all exemptions of revealed truths from the operation of his skepticism) 'qui doivent captiver nôtre esprit, et que nous devons embrasser inelbranlablement, tout le reste est sujet d'Erreur,' etc.

³ This distinction is thus defined by Pascal: 'La foi est différente de la preuve; l'une est humaine, l'autre est un don de Dieu. *Justus ex fide vivit.* C'est de cette foi que Dieu met lui-même dans le cœur, dont la preuve est souvent l'instrument *fides ex auditu*, mais cette foi est dans le cœur, et fait dire non *Scio*, mais *Credo*.'—*Pens.*, Havet, i. p. 157.

⁴ *Œuv.*, iii. pt. 1, 481, where faith is declared to be infallible and more enlightened than nature or philosophy.

the immense ocean of diverse religions.¹ But this superhuman intuition is with Le Vayer, as I suspect it was with Montaigne, merely a *Deus ex machina*, employed to explain motives and impulses not easily accounted for in any other way.

The exact amount of assent which a free-thinker like La Vayer renders to a large and complex system of dogma like that of Romanism, must necessarily be difficult to determine. Probably it will always be liable to variation. We have already noticed the modifying considerations he might have employed in toning down dogmas inconveniently strong; just as a man dilutes spirits in order to make them drinkable. Besides the necessary inferiority of Faith to Knowledge, he had always at hand the skeptical principle of the philosopher's duty to conform to whatever religious worship or political institution might chance to be established in the nation in which he lived. To the disorders and abuses of Romanism he was fully alive.² He quite approves the moral of Boccaccio's story of 'Abraham the Jew.' With one of his bad puns he says that the disorders of the Church savour more of *κακόλυκος* than of Catholic. All the while he professes deference to her, and submits his works to her judgment. His discourse on the Immortality of the Soul, is of importance in estimating his religious position. He collects in it all the presumptive proofs which appeared to him to favour the belief, and though he admits that their aggregate force falls far short of demonstration, he says it is enough to determine his own conviction. On the whole I agree with M. Etienne in allowing Le Vayer a genuine belief in some of the doctrines of the Christian faith. As to the extent of his creed at any one period of his life, we must leave that, where he probably would himself have left it, where at least he left many truths of greater value—in his own Purgatory of Suspense.

Le Vayer and his works have passed more completely out of French literature than even Charron and his *Wisdom*. During his lifetime he was much read; and the tone and spirit of his philosophy are quite in harmony with the best productions of the language. A few disciples professed to receive him as their philosophical and religious teacher. But his style was too formal and uncouth to commend arguments otherwise suitable, to a people which has always placed such stress on literary grace and beauty of form, wit and vivacity of matter, and an extreme linguistic finish in which the thought is often sacrificed to its polished expression. Besides which he had to cope with a formidable rival in Balzac. His jealousy of the greater popularity of this author breaks out in a very distinct

¹ Comp. the anecdote of the King of Muscovy, *Orasius Tubero*, i. p. 409.

² *Eur.*, iii. pt. 1, p. 263-266.

form in one of the last published of his works.¹ In my opinion his main service to modern thought consists in his liberal culture and large-hearted tolerance. A predecessor of Descartes, his *Orasius Tubero* contains many arguments which that thinker put forward in a clearer and more finished form in his *Discourse on Method*. He conveys the torch of free-thought, kindled by Montaigne's *Essais*, from Charron, to Pascal, Huet² and Bayle. As you will have seen, he also represents in his own person aspects of skepticism which we are not likely again to find in combination in any individual skeptic, and so far Le Vayer may claim a distinguished place among his brethren in our list.

* * * * *

TREVOR. Thanks, Arundel, for your elaborate essay. It has, however, raised so many points of interest—and our sitting has already been a little protracted—that I propose we suspend further discussion for the night. You are all engaged, as you know, to come to my house to luncheon to-morrow. Suppose we assemble an hour earlier to have our say of criticism on your paper. We shall thus have conferred on La Mothe-le-Vayer's multiform skepticism the honour of 'sleeping over' it.

Dr. Trevor's proposition was unanimously acceded to.

On the morrow, when the party were again assembled in Dr. Trevor's library, Mrs. Harrington began the discussion:—

MRS. HARRINGTON. How are we to account for the geographical argument of skeptics having so completely lost its power in our days as Mr. Arundel admitted it has. None of us now, on rising from a new book of travels, think that our main inference from the diversity of opinions and customs we have been reading of, is, that truth is impossible. We are not

¹ *I.e. Hexameron Rustique*, 'Cinquesime Journée.' Ed. *Liseux*, p. 94. It may, however, be noticed that Le Vayer is enumerated among Balzac's panegyrists by M. de Montausier, quoted in the *Historiettes* of Tallemant des Reaux, *Balzac*, vol. iv. p. 207. Balzac's opinion of Le Vayer is seen in his letter to Chapelain, Jan. 4, 1639, wherein *apropos* of his reception into the Academy, he writes, "Je me rejouis de la nouvelle acquisition que l'Academie a faite du Philosophe (Pyrrhonien) qui en effet est un galant homme, et ne laisse pas d'avoir de l'esprit, quoiqu'il se serve de la plupart du tems de celui d'autrui."—Balzac, *Lettres à M. Chapelain*, p. 153; cf. *Menagiana*, ii. p. 185.

² Huet is said to have drawn largely from *Orasius Tubero*, though he never quotes it.—Bartholmæss in *Dict. des Sci. Phil.*

in the least danger of doubting the existence of God, who is Spirit, because we have been reading of people who are unable to conceive Him as such, and who worship some idol or fetish instead. Nor do we call in question the truth or beauty of the golden rule of the Gospel because we have been reading of savages who act on diametrically opposite principles.

TREVOR. Besides the decadence of the belief in the descent of all mankind from a single pair, which Arundel touched upon in his paper, we must remember that the general relations of theology and physical science have been completely changed since Le Vayer's time. In the middle ages the apparent, but really fictitious unity of the Romish Church, tended to make oneness and indivisibility a characteristic of all forms of truth and results of human investigation. Christians in the time of Columbus, and other early explorers, would have been far less surprised if they had found the Aborigines of America and other countries exactly like themselves in colour, habits and religious belief than they were at discovering such immense diversities in each of these respects. Now that the radical difference between various races of men is fully established, and the supposed unity of all forms of belief engendered by Romanism and ignorance has lost its power, the argument from geography has become almost inoperative as regards skepticism, and is only adduced as a plea for toleration.

HARRINGTON. A further answer is to be found in the fact which Arundel noticed, viz. the transference of the argument from geography to astronomy, *i.e.* to the possibilities of infinite space. We have pretty well exhausted, or think we have, the beliefs on our own little globe, so we traverse in imagination, as we are justified in doing, the limitless regions of æther, and conceive existences, laws, and phenomena altogether different from those of our present experience. By the way, Arundel, I do not think your analogy as to being asked to throw away one's cash is a fair objection to the employment of the space argument. Those who rely upon it only say, 'Use your ready cash by all means, only do not suppose that there are no riches or circulating mediums in other portions of the universe than those you possess. Do not assume, *e.g.* that Jovians or Saturnians use the gold and silver of our own

little orb. To me Mill's position on this point is absolutely impregnable. Under no circumstances can men who inhabit such an infinitesimally minute space in the universe, for such an exceedingly brief portion of infinite time, be allowed to make their own experience the test of all truth. Terrestriality in space, and actuality in time, are just as unbecoming to a philosopher as insularity to an Englishman.

ARUNDEL. Only the Englishman by a few continental tours can rub off some of his insularity, but in the present infancy of science and æronautics we are unhappily confined to our own little globe. I object to the space argument, that it is not an extension of knowledge. It is in no sense an addition to what I already know to be told that there may be distant worlds in which matter has no gravity, or in which two parallel lines may meet. After all, the only knowledge I can imagine is—excuse the tautology—that which I know, or what differs from it in degree. I can conceive a world in which the forces which govern our globe may be reversed, in which, *e.g.* water might run up a hill, but such imagination is really no more to me than an uneasy dream, in which the normal conditions of waking life are altogether suspended, or thrown into grotesque confusion. When I awake from such a dream all those absurdities immediately collapse. Similarly when I want to *reason* on the abnormal characteristics I have in imagination ascribed to distant worlds, I find myself unable to do so. In the sense of confining human knowledge to human experience, I think the maxim of Protagoras useful: ‘Man is the measure of all things.’

HARRINGTON. But excuse me, Arundel: you mistake the object of the astronomical or space argument. It is not as an extension of knowledge that it is useful, but as a preventive of dogmatism. Of course every man has a right to say, ‘I am unable to conceive this or the other because it has never come within the limits of my experience. . . . So far my experience is *my* sole measure of all created things.’ That may be granted, it is the old truth of the relativity of all knowledge; but when he goes beyond this, and says, ‘My experience is *the* sole measure of all creation,’ thus transforming the relative to an absolute, the finite to the infinite, a skeptic philo-

sopher has surely a right to protest against such a proceeding. He may ask, How can you possibly know this? and may point to the numberless cases in which human experience, not only of the individual but of the race, has been totally reversed by its own progress and development.

ARUNDEL. The human mind has, I fear, an irresistible propensity to take its imaginations for facts, and to condense its vague rhetoric into a compact and irresistible logic. Hence your argument of indefinite possibilities of existence beyond human ken, so far from closing the door, as you say it does, to extravagant doctrine, frequently throws it wide open. The other day I had a talk with a High Church friend on the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, which he interpreted in quite a transubstantiation sense. On my alleging the sameness in the perceptible qualities of bread and wine before and after consecration, I was at once met by the old distinction between essence and qualities, and was told that there might be worlds wherein the inseparable conjunction (as we defined it) between causes and effects might be greatly varied, if not altogether reversed. I tried to point out the inherent skepticism of the reasoning, and compared John Stuart Mill's hypothesis of a world in which $2 + 2 = 5$, as an application in the domain of philosophy of a precisely similar argument. Indeed, it may be applied to justify any superstition, no matter how gross or repugnant to common sense. It seems to me that when we once leave the path of reason and experience, we throw the door open equally to unlimited dogmatism and unlimited skepticism—to superstition on the one hand and unbelief on the other.

HARRINGTON. I am aware that the argument may be abused by persons ignorant of its real implication, though I think such instances will be rare. I have never heard it put forward, as a pretext for belief in witchcraft, that witches may perchance exist in Jupiter. The argument is purely negative—a disclaimer of human omniscience—and cannot properly be advanced for purposes of positive knowledge. Hence the analogy you employed in controverting your friend's Romanism is only superficial; while his reasoning was the product of a very shallow sophistry. Your friend insists on a dogma, and

suggests possibilities in other parts of the universe to support it. He says: Essence and attributes may not be indissolubly connected in Jupiter and Saturn, what makes you certain they are here? Mill on the other hand reasons: 'I know that 2 and 2 are 4 here, for my experience assures me of the fact; but what they may under different circumstances amount to elsewhere I know not. The processes, you see, are converse. Your friend illegitimately makes the unknown the measure of the known. Mill calls in question the attempt to make even the known an absolute standard of the unknown. He would, I suspect, have disdained to expend ratiocination on the former process. • Had he been so inconceivably foolish as to have argued 'I believe that 2 and 2 are 5, although they do not appear so, because they may amount to 5 in Jupiter,' then the parallel with your Transubstantiationist would have been complete. I however concur with you in thinking that a man who believes transubstantiation has in him *the makings* of an extreme skeptic.

ARUNDEL. My objection to Mill is that his argument tends to involve both known and unknown in a common uncertainty. My friend did the same thing in a somewhat different manner. Mill transmitted his unjustifiable hypothesis to distant worlds, my friend brought his sophistries from the same unknown regions. The difference is between export and import.

MISS LEYCESTER. In that case, and assuming that the exports are really absurdities, I agree with Mill. It is very convenient to have in distant worlds a kind of penal settlement whither all kinds of absurdities, inconsistencies, and unveracities may be ideally transported 'for,' I should say, 'the term of their natural lives.' I know not a few wrong notions and foolish fancies—habitual criminals against the commonweal of philosophy—which I should like to relegate to such a metaphysical Botany-Bay. On the other hand importation of absurdities from distant planets is clearly superfluous with such a large production as our own fertile earth, industriously cultivated by unwise men, can raise. Such foreign commodities ought at least to be made to pay a heavy import duty—but that, I suppose, would be interfering with toleration, which is the 'free trade' of philosophical and religious opinion.

TREVOR. It appears to me that we are having a repetition of the philosophical controversy of Mill *v.* Mr. Herbert Spencer, and I fear you are not more likely to come to an agreement than they were, for, as they did, you start from different standpoints. For myself I agree with Harrington—we cannot allow human experience to transcend its own narrow limits. The single fact that its imperfection and variation in time past have been in direct proportion to its growth, may be accepted as a presumption that further extension in space and time would disclose still more uncertainty.

MISS LEYCESTER. I see that M. Etienne thinks Le Vayer may have been the original of Marphurius, the Pyrrhonist philosopher, in Molière's *L'Amour Forcé*. Do you think so, Mr. Arundel?

ARUNDEL. There is just this much of presumption for it. The author of *Orasius Tubero* was clearly the most conspicuous advocate of Pyrrhonism in 1663, when Molière wrote the play. Excepting that circumstance there is really nothing to identify Le Vayer any more than Charron, or Montaigne, or some one of the many disciples of those teachers, with Marphurius, for Pyrrhonism was then the fashionable philosophy. More obvious is the imitation of Trouillagan in Rabelais' *Pantagruel*, where the Pyrrhonist has to decide an alternative of precisely the same kind, and does it in nearly the same manner. Molière's presentation has, however, the advantage in respect of directness and of humour; nothing can well be more humorous and appropriate than the retribution he awards the Pyrrhonist.

MISS LEYCESTER. I think it would enliven our debate if Dr. Trevor would kindly read the scene to us.

TREVOR. Willingly Miss Leycester. I am not such a bigoted or exclusive skeptic that I cannot enjoy a joke against my own philosophy (*Reaches down a book from his shelves and prepares to read Scene viii. of L'Amour Forcé*). Sganarelle I may remind you is in considerable perplexity as to whether he shall marry. After consulting an Aristotelian philosopher and getting in return nothing but scraps of Peripateticism, he has recourse to the Pyrrhonist Marphurius, when the following dialogue takes place:—

Mar. What do you want of me, M. Sganarelle?

Sg. Master Doctor, I need your advice as to a little matter of business, and I am come for that purpose. (*Aside*) Ah! This looks well, he listens attentively, this fellow. (*The Peripatetic had not listened.*)

Mar. Mr. Sganarelle, change if you please that mode of speaking. Our philosophy bids us never enounce a decisive proposition, but to speak of everything with uncertainty, and always to suspend one's judgment. Therefore you should not say—'I am come,' but 'It seems to me that I am come.'

Sg. Seems to me?

Mar. Yes.

Sg. Parbleu! It may well be that it seems to me, since it is so.

Mar. That does not follow, and it might seem to you without the thing being true.

Sg. How! Is it not true that I am here?

Mar. That is uncertain, and we ought to doubt of everything.

Sg. What? Am I not here? Are you not speaking to me?

Mar. It appears to me that you are here, and it seems to me that I am speaking to you, but it is not certain that such is the case.

Sg. Ha! What the d——l. You deceive yourself. Here am I and there you are clearly enough, and there is no 'seems to me' at all about it. Let us leave these subtleties, I pray you, and speak about my business. I come to tell you that I have a strong desire to get married.

Mar. I know nothing about it.

Sg. But I tell you.

Mar. It may be so.

Sg. The girl I am after is very young and very pretty.

Mar. It is not impossible.

Sg. Shall I do well or ill by marrying her?

Mar. The one or the other.

Sg. (*Aside*). Ah! Ah! This is another sort of music. (*To Marphurius*) I ask you if I shall do well to marry the girl I tell you about?

Mar. Just as it may turn out.

Sg. Shall I do ill?

Mar. Perhaps.

Sg. Please answer as you ought.

Mar. Such is my purpose.

Sg. I have a strong inclination for the girl.

Mar. That may be.

Sg. Her father has consented.

Mar. It may be so.

Sg. But in marrying her I fear I shall be deceived by her.

Mar. The thing is feasible.

Sg. What do you think about it?

Mar. It is not impossible.

Sg. But what would you do in my place?

Mar. I don't know.

Sg. What do you advise me to do?

Mar. What you please.

Sg. I am out of patience.

Mar. I wash my hands of it.

Sg. To the devil with the old dreamer.

Mar. That will be as it may.

Sg. Thou tormenting plague! I will make thee change thy note. Thou cur of a mad philosopher (*strikes Marphurius with his stick*).

Mar. Oh! oh! oh!

Sg. There, thou art paid for thy trifling, and I am satisfied.

Mar. How! what insolence! to assault me in this way! to have the audacity to strike a philosopher like me!

Sg. (*mimicking Marphurius's voice and manner*). Correct, if you please, that mode of speaking; we must doubt everything, and you should not say that I have beaten you, but that it seems to you that I have beaten you.

Mar. Ah! I go to complain to the Commissary of the district of the blows I have received.

Sg. I wash my hands of it.

Mar. I have the marks on my body.

Sg. It may be so.

Mar. It is thou who hast treated me so.

Sg. It is not impossible.

Mar. I will have a summons against thee.

Sg. I know nothing of it.

Mar. And thou wilt be convicted.

Sg. That will be as it may.

. . . No doubt the humour of the scene is irresistible and never was the stock argument against Pyrrhonism better expressed. There is only one objection to it. It is utterly inapplicable. No Pyrrhonist, as we well know, ever denied that the blows of a stick gave pain, nor any other direct appeal to the senses. All these patent facts are taken for granted even by Sextus himself.

HARRINGTON. It would seem that the 'argumentum baculinum,' which Dr. Johnson thought a sufficient reply to Berkeley, might be used of other modes of thought. I confess I do not think the worse of any Philosophy which may lay itself open to that species of rejoinder. All modes of human thought seem to me to have their own inconsistencies, though it is not always that they can be made to assume a form so palpable and ridiculous. The distinction, partly humorous and grotesque, partly mournful and distracting, between seeming and being, or between the conclusions of the reason and the facts of common life, is no new truth. After all, man is greater than logic, and his actual needs and feelings are as a rule more direct and powerful arguments than airy systems of thought or ingenious cobwebs of words. That probably is the lesson Molière intended to teach.

ARUNDEL. I am convinced, however, that Molière had some well-known scenes of Rabelais in his mind, and not Le Vayer's philosophy, when he wrote *L'Amour Forcé*. In fact the play contains a number of resemblances to Rabelais which have been duly pointed out by M. Moland in his edition of Molière. Some of the commentators have supposed that Marphurius was intended for Descartes—an utterly untenable supposition.

MISS LEYCESTER. Another reason against Le Vayer being the prototype of Marphurius is Molière's attachment to his son, who very probably shared to some extent his father's opinions. At least he edited his work no less than three times.

TREVOR. Passing to the third part of your Essay: Le Vayer's Tolerance. I agree with your remarks on the unseemly jealousy with which Christians too frequently regard heathendom. The niggardliness of their appreciation of any

merits which may not bear the stamp of professed Christianity, seems to me very pitiful and mean, although of course a direct corollary from dogmatism.

MISS LEYCESTER. I have often thought it like a contrast between rival manufacturers as to trade marks or brands. The competing articles may be of precisely the same nature and may have the same properties, but one asserts its absolute superiority over the other by being stamped with a particular mark. The justice of an Aristides, the morality of a Cato, the martyrdom of a Sokrates, do not differ in kind from the same virtues and acts in distinguished Christians. But they lack the brand of professed or avowed Christianity. Hence Augustine, Calvin and Jansen take the liberty of re-labelling the inculcated articles as so much religious contraband. On the heathen wine vessels they mark 'vinegar'; on their provision packets they stamp the word 'poison.' Taste the rival articles, no palate can discern the difference. Send both to an analytical chemist, and their component elements will be found precisely similar.

HARRINGTON. Your comparison is misleading, Florence. It is by no means a mere matter of trade marks, though such a distinctive sign does more than proclaim the genuineness of one particular article. It is in truth a voucher for the character of the firm that supplied it. There is an important difference in the quality of the rival articles. Heathen morality is morality *per se*. Christian morality is morality plus religion. It is morality hallowed by Divine and absolute sanctions. Every moral act of the Christian has or ought to have a peculiar flavour of sacredness and of Godliness. As we saw in earlier discussions, man stands in the Christian scheme in the place of God, so that Christianity becomes in a sense, though not in that of Comte, a 'Religion of Humanity.' I am aware it is easy to exaggerate the advantages which ethics has obtained by being thus religionized, still it appears to me futile to deny their existence. Through Christianity all social duties have acquired a breadth and elevation, an emotional no less than an intellectual standpoint—a sacred as well as a secular sanction—which have added immeasurably to their lustre and excellence, and by which they satisfy more fully all our needs and capacities.

MISS LEYCESTER. I can better explain my meaning by putting a case : Aristides passing along the streets of Athens sees a man evidently in deep poverty. He relieves him and goes on his way without another thought about his charitable deed : Athanasius while returning home from his cathedral in Alexandria also sees a case of great destitution, and bestows his alms with the conviction that he is thereby discharging a religious duty. May not the charity which dictated the first action be more unaffected and disinterested, and therefore purer, than the complex feelings which actuated the second ; and may not the performing obvious acts of duty as if they were elaborate religious rites add to their ostentation so as to detract from their genuine merits. It appears to me that Aristides would come nearer to the gospel standard of not letting the left hand know what the right hand did.

HARRINGTON. Possibly ; though we have not, and cannot have, data for determining the point. The distinction between the performance of the same act by Aristides and Athanasius lies in this. The first does it from a momentary impulse of pity ; the second adds to that motive the persuasion that he is discharging an universal dictate of social and so far of religious duty. The feeling in the former case is accidental and precarious ; in the latter it is universal and inevitable. If Aristides had 'passed by on the other side,' and left the poor wretch unrelieved, he would have erred against that man. Had Athanasius, standing on the platform of Christian ethics, neglected his duty, he would have sinned both against humanity and against God. Your parallel, however, derives an adventitious but unfair advantage from Athanasius's well-known character, and the probability of his taking a formal view of simple acts of duty. Suppose we take a less suspicious example of the benefit of acting from a universal law of duty : Kant returning from his lecture-room at Königsberg sees a poor man in distress. After inquiring diligently into his circumstances, and ascertaining the case to be one of real need, he relieves the man's wants with the assurance that he is thereby obeying a principle of universal obligation, so that his act assumes the form of absolute duty—a model under similar

circumstances of all human conduct in all time and all space. An act done on such a basis is surely more complete and satisfactory to a man of elevated sentiment than one unrelated to any great principle—the accidental prompting of a momentary, perhaps evanescent, feeling.

TREVOR. But why should the 'virtue' of the poor heathen Aristides necessarily be of that accidental quality? All his actions might have been prompted by the same principle of humanity and kindness, besides which he may have referred them to God—I don't mean the Olympian Deities of the popular creed, whose influence could hardly have been of a moral kind, but that higher, all-creating, all-comprehending Being whom, as Lactantius said, all the best and wisest of the heathen really worshipped.

HARRINGTON. Of course if Aristides' charity or justice were referred to the volition and law of a deity whose character and attributes were good and holy, there could be no real distinction between such virtues in his case and the same virtues in the case of a Christian.

MISS LEYCESTER. I protest, for my part, against over-refinement in distinguishing heathen from Christian morality. Acts of kindness, deeds of mercy, are done every day in the world from mere human sympathy by persons who never once think of asking themselves why they do them, and who have no power, even if they had the will, to refer them to an infinite and eternal standard. The element of real value in all such acts is the pure simplicity and unselfishness of the doer, and I am inclined to think that this would disappear in proportion as he was always careful to consider his conduct in reference to a universal code of action.

ARUNDEL. There is no doubt a considerable amount of spontaneous virtue and goodness, just as there is of latent talent, in the world. A man *e.g.* may have a natural gift for painting who is completely ignorant of its rules, while another may possess a practical knowledge of music who knows nothing of its theory; nevertheless men who want to be scientific painters or musicians will set themselves to learn the laws and methods of those sciences. Reasoning men, Miss Leicester, must be actuated by rational and universal principles, rules of which

they know the why and the wherefore, the origin, purport, and extent. They cannot turn and shift with every transitory impulse or wave of feeling. A finished sculptor may have first manifested his aptitude for his vocation by moulding mud-pies when a child. Still the mud-pie is one thing, and the statue of Minerva of his manhood, exquisitely modelled on the highest principles of the art, is another. . . . Hence I quite agree with Harrington as to the essential characteristic of Christian morality, and its distinction from other codes. I am far from thinking the distinction so great in the eyes of a just God as to constitute a cause for retributive or penal judgment, either in this world or the next. I am nevertheless persuaded of its existence and importance. . . . At the same time we must take heed that the religious sanction—the coping stone of Christian ethics—does not supersede the moral act, which may be termed the foundation stone. The latter is after all of the greater importance. Thus in the case supposed by Miss Leicester, it would have mattered less that Athanasius should have forgotten for the time being the more sacred, or the more general aspects of his charitable deed, than that he should have omitted it altogether. The priority of moral acts over religious service is placed in the very fore-front of Christ's teaching.

TREVOR. Notwithstanding Le Vayer's tolerance, his treatment of the virtues of the heathen errs not so much on the side of liberality as on that of excessive caution. In this respect his work presents a contrast to that of Père Sirmond, also inspired by Richelieu. The main argument of the latter treatise goes more directly to the root of the matter than Le Vayer's *Virtue of the Heathen*. It is this: The love of God consists in keeping His commandments. Now if a man keeps the commandments, even though he does not in form acknowledge God, he can claim the most essential constituents of the love of God. The argument possesses these merits: (1) It insists on the most vital element in all religion. (2) It indicates, from the point of view of Christ's own teaching, the final state of virtuous heathen. No doubt it may be made to appear deficient as conceivably sanctioning the virtues of an Atheist; and it is on that ground vigorously attacked by Pascal in the

Tenth Provincial; but Pascal's Christianity, as we shall find, was not altogether that of the Gospels. I, at least, am eccentric enough to believe that if the case of a virtuous Atheist had been submitted to the judgment of Christ, He would have awarded him a higher place than He did the scribes and Pharisees, who made the commandment of God of none effect by their religious tradition.

ARUNDEL. I am not sure that I agree with you. Atheism was a state of mind so utterly alien from the Semitic instinct, that I am unable to think of it as occurring to Christ even as a possibility. It is left out of Christianity for the same reason that parricide is omitted from the laws of Lycurgus, as too abnormal to be provided for. . . . An old divine used to say that faith and works were the two legs of a man's religion; the absence of either made him deformed, and rendered locomotion halting and imperfect. I should say the same of morality and religion. You may occasionally get one without the other, but in either case the result is but a lame and impotent conclusion. And when both conditions are so imperfect it seems useless to enter upon 'the nicely calculated less or more' of such imperfection. . . . As to the defects in Le Vayer's reasoning in the *Virtue of the Heathen*, we must bear in mind that they were for the most part inevitable. He went so far as he could go in the direction of tolerance. If his patron, Richelieu, was not a bigoted Catholic, and if he disliked the narrow exclusiveness of Jansenism, there is no reason to suppose that he would have relished in a work dedicated to him, pronounced Pelagianism, or a direct contradiction of the decrees of the Council of Trent.

MRS. HARRINGTON. Christianity should deal with heathen morality as the early Bishops of Rome dealt with the Pantheon, when they converted it into a Christian church. It should assimilate and sanction whatever is good and true in other systems, instead of attempting to overthrow them altogether in order to establish itself on their ruins. If in doing this our missionaries and others would have to abate much of their exclusiveness and religious arrogance, this would only tend to bring their methods into closer harmony with that of the Prophet of Galilee. After all, the first and best Mission-

ary was Christ Himself, though His spirit and methods have been strangely caricatured by His disciples—His own meekness and lowliness of heart assuming the form of harsh, aggressive dogma, while His easy yoke has been transformed into one of iron.

MISS LEYCESTER. Your remark, Maria, suggests to me the observation that the distinction between heathen and Christian virtue, pushed to the extreme to which it is often, is utterly alien from the teaching of Christ. What it seems most closely allied to in the Gospels is the Pharisaism which regarded with persistent jealousy Jesus Christ's sitting down to meat with publicans and sinners. How thinking men of our time can be so greatly alarmed by the least juxtaposition or comparison of Christianity with other religions I confess I cannot see. The feeling surely evinces an entire oblivion of the growth of Christianity during so many centuries—albeit we must acknowledge that not all Christianity is Christian any more than all civilization is really civilizing. Christian apologists as a class seem to treat the religion they reverence as a foolish mother treats a spoilt child, *i.e.* killing it with kindness. Instead of trusting to its natural vigour they are perpetually defending it from all sorts of imaginary ailments and impossible dangers. I wish all these fussy alarmists about the health of the most robust religion in the world would read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest King George's saying apropos of *Watson's Apology*, *viz.* 'he did not know that the Bible needed an apology.' As to the greater honour and dignity they pretend to vindicate for it, it would be well to remember that truth needs no additional or extrinsic recommendation. Its authority is inherent, self-asserted, and inalienable: and further that no stronger claim of prestige or prerogative should be asserted for Christ's Revelation than that which He has Himself seen fit to claim for it.

HARRINGTON. You might have put your case stronger, Florence, by making all that distrust the effect of a very real, though partly concealed skepticism. In its essentials Christianity is proof against open attack. What tends to weaken it more than anything else are accretions it has received by un-

scrupulous dogmatists, and senseless or irrational apologies made on its behalf by timorous defenders.

After a short silence Dr. Trevor said : The luncheon bell has sounded for some little time, so, if you please, we will adjourn.

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PASCAL.

*' A quoi bon la lente science
Si l'homme ne peut entrevoir,
Après tant d'âpre patience
Que les bornes de son savoir.'*

Sully Prud'homme, *Les vaines Tendresses*.

' Dieu m'a ôté la foi humaine pour donner plus de force à la foi Divine.'

Saying attributed to Père Hardouin.

' Voilà la guerre ouverte entre les hommes ou il faut que chacun prenne parti, et se range nécessairement ou au dogmatisme ou au Pyrrhonisme ; car qui pensera demurer neutre sera Pyrrhonien par excellence.'

Pascal, *Pensées*, Ed. Faugère, ii. p. 103.

CHAPTER VI.

PASCAL.

HARRINGTON. It is a pity our Pascal¹ discussion did not occur about Christmas.

TREVOR. Why so?

HARRINGTON. Because it is the season dedicated to riddles and enigmas. Of all human puzzles Blaise Pascal is, I think, the most insoluble. He is a kind of psychological sphinx; a human hieroglyph—occult, mysterious and utterly undecipherable.

MISS LEYCESTER. Please don't frighten us, Charles! We are assembled on purpose to try our skill, but if you tell us the riddle is unsolvable, we may just as well decline the discussion.

ARUNDEL. Besides, Harrington is anticipating. His terrible sphinx may find an Œlipus in the doctor's paper, to say

¹ The following are the works which have been consulted, and are quoted on Pascal:—

Pascal, *Œuvres Complètes*, Ed. Lahure, 2 vols.

Pascal, *Pensées* par Faugère, 2 vols. 8vo.

Pascal, *Pensées* par E. Havet, 2 vols. 8vo. This is the Edition of the *Pensées* quoted in the following pages, unless that of Faugère is expressly named.

Port Royal v. Dr. H. Reuchlin.

Port Royal par C. A. Sainte Beuve; chiefly vols. ii. and iii.

Pascal's Leben und Geist seiner Schriften v. Dr. H. Reuchlin, 1820.

Port Royal by Rev. Chas. Beard, 2 vols.

Études sur Pascal, par V. Cousin, 6th Edition, 1876.

Études sur Pascal, par M. Vinet.

Le Scepticisme (Ænesilème—Pascal—Kant), par E. Saisset.

Études sur Pascal, par l'Abbé Flottes.

Lelut *L'Amulette de Pascal*.

H. Martin, *Histoire de France*, liv. lxxiii.

Good and fairly complete Biographies of Pascal may be found in the *Nouvelle Biographie Générale*; Franck, *Dict. des Sciences Philosophiques*, Ersch and Grueber, *Encyclo.*, Series iii.

nothing of the keen diagnosis awaiting it from our united hands.

TREVOR (gravely). For myself: 'I am Trevor, not Œdipus.' Pascal's character is a long-admitted psychological curiosity, possibly unique in the history of mental science. Bayle calls him the single paradox of the human species, and thinks he deserves the characteristic which Lucretius applies to Empedokles of being almost super-human:—

'Ut vix humana videatur stirpe creatus.'

MISS LEYCESTER. But we have had these composite characters before—men, whose minds, like Nebuchadnezzar's image, are made up of gold, silver, brass, iron and clay interfused and intermingled in a curious and altogether irregular manner. I presume Pascal only differed from the rest by having a few more diversities in his own composition, or perhaps the interfusion was of an unusually fantastic and complex kind.

TREVOR. Not quite that; one element more or less in a gigantic many-sided human character does not much signify. The peculiarity in Pascal's case is that there is so much of each separate element that you might easily construct a whole man out of it. To recur to your simile. He possesses as much gold as if he were like another and more material creation of Nebuchadnezzar's, all gold; as much silver, as if that was the only metal in his composition; and as much iron and clay, as if his entire character were formed out of one or other of those inferior materials. He is therefore not one image, but an assemblage of diverse images. He concentrates in his single personality a whole gallery of statuary. You remember Sidney Smith's definition of a great man as a kind of conglomerate humanity; he is not one, but six or seven men; Pascal more than any other name in modern times answers to that description. He is not one, but six or seven different men; with the additional peculiarity that they are not six or seven dwarfs who have been put together to make a giant, but they are each of them full-grown, well-developed men; nay, even giants of no ordinary stature; while each also possesses a completeness of individuality and of vigorous life, as if he existed by and for himself, and quite independently of all the rest. If we can

suppose Dame Nature setting about her noble creations, on the plan which our cooks employ in concocting their dishes, we might imagine the original recipe from which Pascal was constructed, to have been something of this kind:—‘Take an eminent mathematician, a profound scientist, an original thinker in ethics and philosophy, a fervid religionist, a thorough skeptic, a polished man of the world, a dissipated character,¹ a superstitious ascetic, a rare humourist, a melancholy hypochondriac, a brilliant writer of French prose; mix very slightly, put a thin crust of individuality over all, bake, and serve in’—what shall we say?—‘a cracked dish.’

MISS LEYCESTER. The last is certainly a novel recommendation in a cookery receipt. I myself should have said, though I fear it would not have been quite true of Pascal—a sound dish. The number and strength of the incompatible ingredients are quite enough to account for the poor dish fracturing so soon, without the help of an original flaw.

ARUNDEL (in pretended ecstasy). Wonderful and yet more wonderful!! What with Miss Leycester’s Nebuchadnezzar’s image, Trevor’s whole gallery of statuary, and now the Pascal dish of both, we are likely to have an interesting monstrosity—a genuine ‘*Monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens*,’ we had better reserve for ourselves the ‘*lumen ademptum*’ to mark the bewilderment which the bare contemplation of such a portent must produce on an ordinary beholder. I hope, Doctor, you are not exaggerating the puzzling qualities of the problem in order to enhance the merits of the solution you are about to offer us. As to myself, the interest I feel in Pascal is not altogether of a personal kind. I look upon his skepticism as a curious and anomalous incident in the history of Jansenism. One would hardly have expected to find a plant of such a nature, and manifesting such vigorous growth, in the secluded garden of Port Royal. On the other hand, skepticism is a natural product of Jesuitism, as Pascal himself has abundantly shown in the *Provincials*.

¹ This designation may appear to some harsh and exaggerated, but it seems justified by one episode in Pascal’s life, and it is employed by several of his critics. Thus: e.g. M. Franck in the *Dict. des Sciences Philosophiques*, speaks of a work ‘Composé à l’époque de sa plus grande dissipation.’

HARRINGTON. I think you are premature, Arundel, in supposing that Jansenism contained no principle which could have ministered to the growth of skepticism. Of course, I do not know what the Doctor is going to tell us; but you remember our Augustine discussion, and the moral and intellectual impotence which is necessarily implied in every exaggeration of human weakness.

MRS. ARUNDEL. I am quite surprised to hear what you say of Pascal's character; indeed, I was not aware that there was anything even suspicious in his religious belief until I found we were to discuss him as a skeptic. I have a copy of *Pascal's Thoughts* given me by an aunt many years ago, and if the different opinions and sentiments of that book were really Pascal's, I think there can be no doubt that whatever else he was, he was not a skeptic, but a very earnest and sincere believer.

TREVOR. Alas! Mrs. Arundel, there are, as I shall soon have to explain, two Pascals known to fame—an old Pascal, who existed before 1840 or thereabouts, pious, devout, correct and orthodox, the oracle of many a pietistic and evangelical circle; and a new Pascal who came into literary being about the same date—restless, enquiring, philosophic, skeptical. Pascal the first, the Pascal of our childhood, with all his undoubted excellencies, was a literary impostor. His *Thoughts* so-called, were in a great measure not of his thinking. Friends with more piety than honesty suppressed many of his erratic, but beautiful and original utterances, and substituted religious commonplaces of their own,¹ or thoughts which they took upon them to determine Pascal ought to have excogitated—thus treating his real sentiments not as gipsies, in Sheridan's simile; treat stolen children, disguising them to make them pass for their own, but conversely like impostors of another class, who palm off adulterations for genuine articles, and give them an influential name to cover the deceit.

MRS. HARRINGTON. I have read somewhere that Pascal (I mean Pascal the second) was so grossly superstitious as to wear a mystical amulet round his neck, as I suppose, a kind of charm. Even after the warnings we have received of his wonderful character, this seems to me altogether incredible.

¹ This refers to Bossut's Edition, not to that of Port Royal.

TREVOR. Nevertheless it is quite true, Mrs. Harrington ; nor when you come to know more about him, will you think it so utterly incredible ; the fact, though striking, is only a single one among the many eccentricities which go to the forming of this '*incomprehensible monster*,' as, with what is clearly a generalization derived from his own character, he termed mankind ; but it is not true, so far as is known, that he used it as a charm ; he apparently kept it in memory of what he considered a stupendous and miraculous occurrence of some kind. But I agree with you—the amulet is a curious feature considered in relation to Pascal's skepticism. If a painter wanted a subject to symbolize human inconsistency, he might paint Pascal writing one of his extreme skeptical *dicta* with one hand, while with the other he is cherishing his amulet ; or, adoring on his knees 'the Holy Thorn' which he fully believed cured his niece.

MISS LEYCESTER. I cannot see why any one should presume to find fault with Pascal's amulet, or, for that matter, with the small weaknesses of any great man. For my part, I am always inclined to reverence them, as pledges of a common fallible humanity. Lessing said of Luther, that he held him in such reverence that he was glad to find a few defects in his character to prevent his idolizing him. That is just what I feel. A great man's stupendous qualities I regard with silent awe and distant worship, but if he has perceptibly a weak point or two in his character, if he is—

'A creature not too wise or good
For human nature's daily food.'

then, although there is a little diminution of reverence, there is much more scope for love and sympathy as with a genuine fellow-man. So far from blaming the weaknesses of such men as Pascal—wishing the sun were without spots—I think we ought to be really grateful that there are few men so intolerably great and immaculate that there is no room for common humanity. We ought to cherish these precious follies, just as some people do relics and mementos of saints ; indeed the latter only create in me a feeling of despair at their unattainable virtues as well as a disbelief in their existence, whereas a man's weakness or error is infinitely more credible. I should like to

make a collection, if it were possible, of all the intellectual infirmities of really great men and women—we have more than one collection of their tiresome superhuman excellencies—a museum, *e.g.* which should contain in some visible form, pictorial or otherwise, such mementos as: the demon of Sokrates, the tub of Diogenes, the grasshopper which Peisistratus hung before the Akropolis, and the hundred-fold charms and amulets which the ancients used to ward off evil and to ensure good fortune; while in modern times we might have Montaigne kissing the pope's toe, Agrippa's horoscopes, Cardan's familiar spirit, Glanvil's witches, Pascal's amulet and his adoration of the holy thorn, Sir Kenelm Digby's sympathetic powder, the divine voice of Joan of Arc, Bishop Huet's faith in the liquefaction of St. Januarius's blood, and Lord Bacon's belief in the transmutation of metals.

HARRINGTON. You needn't stop there, Florence. If your museum is to contain all the follies of the great and learned, you will need a large room. You must include such relics as the Squaring of the Circle, Perpetual Motion, the Philosopher's Stone, the Elixir of Life, the Alchemists' furnaces and retorts, and the various instruments and methods of magic, together with a number of other quaint ideas and opinions long since relegated to the dark sepulchre of oblivion—a more fitting depository than your museum, perhaps.

TREVOR. On the contrary, I think Miss Leycester is right. The world, like the temple of Neptune filled with votive tablets, has quite enough mementos of supposed successes, achievements and victories; a few records and relics of its merited defeats and failures, leaving out of consideration undeserved and therefore glorious failures, would be eminently useful in order to subdue to some extent its overweening faith in human wisdom. From this point of view, Pascal's amulet and his other eccentricities are not the least instructive features of his history, albeit not proofs of consistency, . . . but we must admit, consistency in Pascal's character, as in that of Montaigne, would itself be inconsistent.

HARRINGTON. I observe that some of Pascal's biographers, while they make all his incongruities hinge upon his love of truth, seem to treat this unquestionable fact as if it were

enough to harmonize and unify, and so to remove, the various discords and discrepancies in his character, and thereby they attempt to prove his virtual consistency; whereas, instead of removing, it merely serves to explain them, it affords them a basis and a *rationale*. Just as Kepler's laws and Newton's discovery of gravitation harmonized the irregular and seemingly capricious motions of the planets and their satellites not by destroying the irregularities, but by proving that they were inevitable, so in Pascal's case (and Blanco White was another striking instance) the love of truth implanted in a nature like his impelled him to his various eccentricities. Indeed it is a fact not sufficiently recognized, but which is amply borne out by our skeptical researches, that the eager pursuit of truth in different directions, if unaccompanied by caution, sobriety and calmness of judgment, necessarily produces a considerable amount of what to an outsider would seem impetuous waywardness and unregulated impulse. This is no doubt the reason why some skeptics are so often branded with the injurious epithets of restlessness and eccentricity. Consider them from their centre point of a passionate ardour for truth wherever it may be found, combined with a disregard of conventional ideas and opinions, and though the eccentricities are not destroyed, they are accounted for. Of course a well-ordered community will regard these untoward impulses with suspicion and dislike. Where every locomotive is provided with long-laid rails and sleepers, the aberrations of an erratic machine like Pascal will find just as much indulgence as we should bestow on some ill-regulated engine which had a troublesome propensity for running off the line.

ARUNDEL. That illustrates exactly my view of Pascal. He seems to me like a locomotive which at different times takes its departure from different stations; and after getting up steam rushes madly along for a comparatively short distance, and then suddenly is thrown, or rather throws itself, off the rails.

TREVOR. You must except the last stage on the 'line,' *viz.* that of religious mysticism. On that he kept the rails to the end.

MISS LEYCESTER. I question whether Pascal was really more inconsistent than it is the nature and prerogative of every

human being to be. Of course the motion of large bodies will seem greater than the corresponding motion of smaller objects. The wave movement of an inland sea will naturally appear greater than the ripple on a fish-pond, though both may be caused by the same breeze. Pascal's movements in an ordinary man would have attracted no notice, and certainly would not have been considered eccentric. But what I want to know is, why, when dealing with that essence of mutability—man—we should use such terms as eccentricity, irregularity, waywardness, and a few more of those tacit reproaches of mental independence with which all languages abound. Why should Pascal *e.g.* have been inconsistent? Where is the hard and fast line which separates consistency from inconsistency? Who established such a standard, and when and by what right? Why should not Pascal follow one track to-day and another to-morrow, if he were so minded? The highest consistency for every human being is when he follows his own divinely implanted instincts, the promptings of a lively, earnest, albeit perhaps rebellious and turbulent passion after truth. Any one who has insight to perceive, and courage to avow it, must admit that he finds within him erratic ideas and vagrant impulses, thoughts and feelings which are not invariably conformable to established opinions, and which certainly follow no iron law of unswerving regularity. Among the many interpretations assigned to 'Hamlet,' I think one of the likeliest is that Shakespeare intended to represent humanity in the way in which Montaigne does, taking his own self-experience as a commentary on the text. 'Certes c'est un sujet merveilleusement, vain, divers, et ondoyant, que l'homme,' or as Pascal, when he termed man an 'incomprehensible monster.' What more natural or human than Hamlet's introspection: 'I am myself indifferent honest, and yet I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me. I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious, with more offences at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in.' Suppose Hamlet's confession applied to the suggestions of a restive, unquiet intellect, and you would have depicted the mental character of a Montaigne or a Pascal. Hence I cannot enough admire the im-

perturbable hypocrisy which so many biographers evince when dealing with great characters like Pascal, Montaigne, Goethe, Heine, etc., utterly ignoring their own vacillations and inconsistencies, the trifling extent of which is in due proportion to the trivial commonplace nature of their minds; they apply to those giant intellects a vigorous unbending rule of uniformity, the least departure from which they visit with severe reprehension or pitying scorn. It is just as if a mouse, after diligently creeping round and surveying an elephant, were gravely to pronounce: 'No doubt it was a stupendous beast, but utterly devoid of proportion and regularity of structure. Its body was much too ponderous for its legs, while as a crowning eccentricity its tail, or what should have been its tail, was affixed to its head, and the animal employed it to put food its mouth.'

ARUNDEL. Well, as we are all mice engaged in the contemplation of the elephant—Pascal, we had better communicate our verdict with some reserve, otherwise we shall also fall under the lash of Miss Leycester's vigorous denunciation.

HARRINGTON. An universe, or for that matter a society, arranged in accordance with Florence's 'Counsels of Perfection,' would be intolerable for ordinary, quiet, humdrum folk—the bulk of humanity in short, to live in. No doubt there are elements of irregularity in every human character—sallies of passion, spontaneous impulses in speculation and in action, tendencies to extremes and excesses of different kinds—which every well ordered society is in self-defence obliged to repress, at least when they assume too violent and obtrusive a character. On the other hand psychology, and therefore human eccentricity, has its laws. The action and speculation of every man, no matter how capricious, are dependent on definite causes, though these are mostly so subtle as to defy detection. Pascal's violent changes of character were as much the effect of organic and psychical agencies as the commonplace conduct of the most automatic of human machines that ever existed.

TREVOR. In our treatment of the skeptics I think we have as a rule kept ourselves free from the repression of individuality, or the measuring giants by tapes derived from and adapted for our own pigmy statures, which, as Miss Leycester truly remarks, is a frequent fault of biographers. Similarly,

in the paper I am about to read to you, I do not in the least pretend, as Arundel just now suggested, to solve an insolvable enigma, or to bring an enormous intellect like Pascal's within the quiet and unvarying scope of ordinary belief and action. Of course where psychological causes are evident I have tried to trace Pascal's changes and opinions to them. But considering him as a whole, and in relation to the rest of humanity—withal not forgetting Miss Leycester's parable of the mouse and elephant—I may so far forestal my essay as to say that having found Pascal a problem, and having, as I hope, thrown some light on a few of the many problematical points of his character, it is still as a problem that I am compelled to leave him.

Trevor then began his paper.

* * * * *

Of all the great names we have hitherto met in our progress—and the course of free-thought flows by great minds just as naturally as a broad, navigable river flows past great towns—Pascal is probably that which enjoys most celebrity, not only of a philosophical but also of a popular kind. In a considerable degree this is no more than the tribute justly done to his multifarious excellencies. To the mathematician he is the discoverer of the calculus of probabilities and the properties of the cycloid. To the natural philosopher he is the verifier of Torricelli's discovery of the weight of gaseous bodies and atmospheric air. To the religious controversialist he is the author of the most masterly work in modern times on the issues between Jesuitism and Christianity. To the philosopher he is the profound thinker and critic to whom must be ascribed many detached thoughts, reasonings, and intuition-flashes of singular wisdom, audacity and beauty. While to the philologist and *litterateur* he is one of the greatest masters of French style and diction.

But besides the fame which properly belongs to his varied powers, Pascal enjoys also a spurious renown; for most of his popularity, especially among religious thinkers, is due to a misconception both of his character and his works. It is the Pascal of the *Thoughts*, not of the *Provincials*, nor of various discoveries in mathematical and physical science, that has achieved such a wide-spread celebrity. When the early editions of the *Pensées* appeared, the religious world of Europe was delighted. Here was a work which combined the keen self-diagnosis of Augustine's *Confessions* with the mystical depth of Thomas à Kempis, and whose style in its singular simplicity, direct-

ness, and purity was superior to the rhetorical inflation of the former, while its piquant variety contrasted favourably with the pious monotony of the latter. These eulogies were no doubt well merited, but—the book was not Pascal's, at least it was only partly his. The Port-Royalists, with more regard for the character of their community than for literary veracity, had garbled and falsified the early editions of the *Thoughts*¹ by suppressing their skeptical and free-thinking utterances, and adding a large quantity of pious reflections which Pascal never wrote. The researches of MM. Faugère, Cousin and Havet, while restoring the genuine texts, have probably detracted from Pascal's popularity as a religious thinker,² but have given to philosophy and free-thought one of the most remarkable characters to which they can lay claim, and to psychological science one of the most puzzling studies which the composite nature of humanity has ever presented for its contemplation.

Blaise Pascal was born in 1623, of an ancient and noble family. His father, who held the office of President of the Court of Aids in Auvergne, was a man of considerable mathematical acquirements, and of independent spirit. Few of our skeptics have evinced a greater precocity than the subject of our enquiry. His sister, Madame Perier, in that charming and affectionate *Memoir* which will embalm his memory to far distant ages, tells us, that he early manifested proofs of an extraordinary intellect. . . . In the elementary lessons on physical science which his father used to give him, 'he wanted to know the reason of everything, "*rerum cognoscere causas*," and whenever his young intellect was not content with such reasons as his father could give, he devised others which seemed more satisfactory.'

This—the inborn faculty of enquiry and distrust—the true skeptical afflatus—remained, with the possible exception of a few episodes, the presiding genius of his whole intellectual life. Insatiably eager after truth, and impatient of any but the fullest satisfaction of his craving appetite and large capacity, his sister says that, 'always and in everything truth was the sole object of his mind, and nothing satisfied him but its attainment.'³ The story of his mathematical precocity is well known, and few incidents in the early life of great thinkers are more interesting than the picture left us by Madame Perier—the sickly, pensive child, forbidden by his father to study or talk of mathematics, shutting himself up in a garret and occupying his leisure moments in scrawling with bits of charcoal his

¹ Cf. Cousin, *Études sur Pascal*, p. 105, etc., etc.

² Cf. the fragment 'sur Pascal,' in M. Prevost Paradol's *Essais*, p. 338.

³ *Vie*, etc., par Mme. Perier. Havet, *Pens.*, i. lxiv.

'rounds' and 'bars' (as he termed 'circles' and 'straight lines') upon the walls and floor, until he had evolved from his twelve-year-old brain all the axioms, theorems, and problems of Euclid so far as the thirty-second proposition of the first book. If there is any defect in Madame Perier's delicious little picture, it is perhaps the Cato-like austerity of the father, who could witness these proofs of marvellous genius and application in his child without bestowing upon him some slight token of paternal affection. He left the room, we are told, without saying a word, and unbosomed himself in tears of joy to a friend who lived close by. Acting by the advice of this friend, M. Pascal allowed his son to read a copy of Euclid, but his own unaided efforts had already imparted such a mastery of geometrical principles, that he was able to follow his author, and explain his propositions, by merely looking at the diagrams.

At the age of sixteen, Pascal wrote a small work on Conic Sections, which his father sent to Descartes, who received it with the suspicion and distrust he generally awarded to the labours and inventions of other thinkers. Sainte Beuve remarks that he was ungenerous enough to exhibit symptoms of jealousy at the rising genius of Pascal, regarding the youth of sixteen years as a possible rival. Further proof of his proficiency both in mathematics and in physical science are afforded by his invention, when he was yet only nineteen years of age, of an arithmetical machine, designed to help his father in the calculations belonging to his office of Surveyor at Rouen, and which is affirmed to have been the model which Mr. Babbage brought to perfection in this country. He also instituted a series of laborious researches into Torricelli's experiments as to the weight of atmospheric air, and the nature of a vacuum. The possibility of the last he announced in words which show his freedom from the Aristotelian and scholastic bonds in which physical science was still confined. A vacuum, he said, was not an impossibility, neither was it regarded by Nature with the abhorrence which many people thought. Unhappily these severe studies, with others of a kindred nature, in which the young philosopher had been engaged from his earliest years, had the effect of further enfeebling what had been from the first only a weak constitution. From the age of eighteen to the end of his life he assures us he never passed a single day without pain. The too-hastily matured fruit was destined to a decay not less rapid. The marvel is, under all the circumstances of the case, that the maturity attained such excellence, and that it lasted so long as it did. We have no account of Pascal's religious convictions during these years of scientific thought and toil. The Pascal family was religious, and we know that our young thinker had an almost unlimited capacity

for religious fervour and devotional feeling. His sister tells us that he had never been inclined to free-thinking in religion, and he would ascribe this to his father's teaching:—that whatever was the object of Faith could not be that of Reason, much less subject to Reason. Moreover, his whole mind was at present taken up with the investigation of physical problems. The strange alternations in Pascal's life had already commenced. As yet the intellect dominated, so far as its immense capacity could be filled by mere abstract science; soon we shall find the religious sentiment preponderating, and preparing to avenge by its overmastering influence the neglect in which it had hitherto been allowed to stagnate.

It was in connection with his experiments on the equilibrium of fluids and the weight of atmospheric air that the future author of the *Provincials* first came into contact with the Jesuits. A certain Father Noel wrote to Pascal a long letter¹ full of objections to the results he claimed to have obtained by his experiments, and especially denying the possibility of a vacuum. The letter was couched in courteous terms, and Pascal replied at some length.² Father Noel rejoined in another letter still more lengthy, and not quite so courteous. This he moreover followed up by a work which bore a title a little more appropriate to its contents than the author designed, for it was called the *Fullness of Emptiness* (*La Plein du Vide*).³ In this treatise Father Noel announces his intention of clearing Nature from the novel imputation of a vacuum; and possibly feeling that his science was no match for Pascal's, he tried to correct the disparity by vulgar abuse. Accordingly the Dedication and other parts of the book are full of accusations of ignorance, falsehood and bad faith, better calculated to irritate than to convince the young philosopher. So much was this the case, that M. Pascal senior, fearing the effect of these controversial amenities on the excitable mind of his son, took up his pen in the cause, and with a curious prescience of the *Provincial Letters* forewarned Father Noel not to commit such offences against a young man who, seeing himself provoked without cause, might by the irritation of the injury, and the rashness of his youth, be tempted to repel his invective in terms capable of causing him *a lasting repentance*.⁴ The researches of the younger philosopher received a final and triumphant confirmation in the ex-

¹ See the Letter in vol. ii. p. 180 of Lahure's very neat and compendious edition of Pascal's complete works.

² *Œuv. Comp.*, ed. Lahure, ii. p. 190.

³ The work is reprinted in *Œuv. Comp.*, p. 199.

⁴ See 'Lettre de M. Pascal le Père au P. Noël,' in *Œuv. Comp.*, p. 234, etc., etc.

periments which he commissioned his brother-in-law, M. Perier, to institute on his behalf in the mountains of the Puy de Dome. The instructions he gave on that occasion show his clear perception of the problem to be solved: 'If it should happen,' he said, 'that the height of the quicksilver should be less at the top than at the base of the mountain, we must conclude that the weight or pressure of air is the sole cause of it, and not the horror of a vacuum, since it is very certain that there is much more air at the foot of the mountain than at its summit, while we cannot say that nature abhors a vacuum at the foot of a mountain more than at its summit.' The results which M. Perier obtained were such as to establish completely Pascal's theory, and to ravish the experimenter himself with admiration and astonishment.¹

This triumph was achieved in 1648; but in 1646 an event had occurred of more importance to Pascal's inner life and our present study than his physical researches: in other words, the whole Pascal family was brought under the influence of Jansenism. On that strange episode in the history of the Romish Church, the causes which contributed to it, the eminent characters which adorned it, the superstition which debased it, or its rapid decline and extinction, you will not expect to hear anything from me in an Essay on Pascal's skepticism. For the present it will suffice to remind you that its main principle was the stress upon human weakness and original sin, and the absolute need of superhuman grace to produce man's recovery and the ability to perform any good work. This is (as Harrington has just reminded us) the basis of Augustinian dogma, and we have already touched upon its relation to skepticism. There can be no doubt, as we shall presently find, that it operated very largely as a main element in Pascal's unbelief. First as an originating principle, secondly as a religious sanction.

The conversion of the Pascal family to Jansenism was brought about accidentally. A fall by which M. Pascal senior injured his thigh, introduced him to two brothers who were amateur surgeons and devoted Jansenists. The intercourse thus commenced quickly ripened into a warm friendship, destined soon to be cemented by community of religious feelings and sympathies. The Pascal family though, as I have said, religious, were not enthusiasts; they were not yet 'enlightened' (*éclairé*), to use the technical term for Jansenist perfection. This further stage of esoteric excellence they, however, soon

¹ See M. Perier's interesting letter, in *Pascal, Œuv. Comp.*, ii. p. 313, and on the relative importance of Pascal's experiments with those previously instituted by Torricelli, Galileo and Descartes, comp. Whewell, *Induct Phil.*, ii. p. 53.

attained by means of the zealous ministrations of their new teachers, and the Jansenist books they lent them. Ste Beuve well points out¹ the effect which these writings were adapted to produce on the keen religious susceptibilities of the younger Pascal. The following extracts are striking when read by the light of some of the later *Thoughts*. In a little work entitled *The Reformation of the Inner Man*, Jansen thus remarks of worldly pleasure, 'Hence comes the research into the secrets of Nature which do not concern us, which it is useless to know, and which men do not wish to discover, except merely for the sake of knowledge. Hence comes that execrable curiosity of the magic art,' etc., etc. 'Who may express,' he asks in another place, 'in how many things, though base and despicable, our curiosity is continually tempted, and how great is often our weakness? When our ears or eyes are surprised and struck by the novelty of some object, as of a hare running, of a spider catching flies, and of many other similar encounters ("he might have added," suggests Ste Beuve, "the rise of the quicksilver in a tube"), how much our mind is affected by them, and even violently carried beyond itself.' Then, in the true pietistic tone, he presently adds, 'And when we return to ourselves, and elevate ourselves to contemplate that incomparable beauty of the Eternal Verity, wherein abides the certain and saving knowledge of all things, one ought not to find it strange if that multitude of images and phantoms with which vanity has filled our mind and heart, attacks us and carries us downward, and seems to say to us—Where are you going, covered as you are with sins, and so unworthy to approach God. Whither are you going?'²

Such was the mode in which the religious enthusiast spoke of the worldly learning which had occupied the whole of the younger Pascal's life, and doubtless a considerable part of that of his father. Such were the sparks of fervid though narrow-minded Pietism which fell upon the prepared train of the emotional tenderness and religious susceptibility of our young philosopher. He quickly took fire, indeed he was the first to be 'enlightened,' and the 'enlightenment,' though not abiding, was marked by the intensity of conviction which characterized every stage of his career. From a professional point of view I cannot help connecting his conversion with the fact that for some years he had been in declining health, the consequence in part of his studious ardour, and partly of an originally weak constitution. I do not wish to imitate Ste Beuve, who with delicate irony suggests that the abandonment of the world by the female leaders of Port Royal might have some remote connexion with their having been severely

¹ *Port Royal*, ii. 479–480.

² Ste Beuve, *P. R.*, ii. 480.

disfigured by smallpox,¹ and therefore I by no means wish to ascribe Pascal's conversion to increased physical debility; I only observe it as a noteworthy circumstance that both on this, and the later occasion of his re-conversion, the access of religious fervour was undoubtedly accompanied by nervous disorders of a very marked kind. While it would be a mistake to attribute the violent mental changes which make the intellectual career of Pascal unique in human history entirely to nervous disorganization, it would be a still greater error to ignore the coincidence of those abrupt changes with morbid psychical states, manifested as the latter are both by physical symptoms and by mental hallucination and monomania. I have indeed long cherished the opinion that the intellectual character of Pascal cannot be truthfully interpreted except by men who have studied the pathology of the human mind. Hitherto for the most part he has been regarded as the sole property of the theologian and the philosopher, it seems to me that a considerable share in him belongs of right to the student of morbid and pathological anatomy.

But without attempting the impossible task of weighing the respective shares in which physical and purely spiritual influences had in Pascal's conversion, it was undoubtedly sincere. He plunged into the new enthusiasm with all the unrestrained eagerness of his nature. At once he became the apostle of Jansenism for his family. His sister Jacqueline was the first fruits of the new domestic propaganda. His sister Gilberte and her husband followed next; while last of all his father allowed himself to be persuaded. Nor did the young zealot confine himself to methods of persuasion. So eager was he to defend and proclaim his religious orthodoxy, that in combination with two other Jansenists as young and as hot-headed as himself, he denounced to the archbishop as a heretic a poor Capuchin friar who entertained some visionary notions about the Virgin; nor was this all, but in their exuberant zeal they even attempted to draw him out and entrap him, as De Francon did Vanini, by making him commit himself. Happily the good sense of the bishop in whose diocese the poor mystic lived, sufficed to quell both the denunciatory zeal of the young informers, and, ultimately, the more potent hostility of the Archbishop of Rouen, who was willing to make a public example of the supposed heretic.

Meanwhile Pascal was seized with a severe attack of illness, and what is of especial importance, as I have already hinted, his illness was clearly of a nervous kind. He suffered from a paralysis of the

¹ *Port Royal*, ii. p. 467, note, 'Je le rappelle parce que cela m'a paru revenir assez souvent, mais je ne veux pas dire pourtant qu'on ne donne à Dieu que ce dont le monde ne veut pas on ne veut plus.'

lower limbs, and for some time could not move without crutches. The same severe nervous disturbance affected his throat, so that he was unable to swallow except spasmodically, drop by drop. His feet and legs were cold as death, and he was obliged to resort to all kinds of artificial methods to keep up the circulation. A continual burning pain in the bowels, and racking headaches, filled up the cup of the young thinker's misery. Under the circumstances, study was interdicted, indeed since his conversion it had almost become a forbidden and unholy thing. To use his sister's words, he had 'learnt from Christianity to live only for God and to have no other object but Him.'¹ Nevertheless his mathematical and physical science researches still exercised considerable fascination for him, and in the intervals of his sickness he repeatedly took up his scientific pursuits, though every intellectual relapse was afterwards bemoaned as a religious backsliding of the worst kind, and was expiated by severe ascetic and religious observances.

When he had somewhat recovered from this nervous attack, he removed with his sister Jacqueline to Paris in the autumn of 1647, partly for the change, and partly to procure better medical advice. Here both brother and sister came into actual contact, for the first time, with Port Royal, and under the influence of Singlier's powerful eloquence. The result was to confirm their religious convictions, and to add new fervour to their Pietistic devotion. Jacqueline Pascal soon manifested a desire to join the recluses of Port Royal, in which she was warmly seconded by her brother. She applied to their father for his consent, which at first he gave, but upon further consideration withdrew. On his death in 1651, that obstacle was removed, but a new one appeared, for her brother who had at first so vehemently applauded her resolve, now refused his consent, and did his utmost to dissuade her from taking the step.

This conduct is important for us, inasmuch as it denotes a growing change in Pascal's spiritual and intellectual convictions, as profound as that which he had just undergone, though of a very different character. Leopardi said that superabundance of inner life propels a man into the outer life. Such a propulsion Pascal experienced by his removal to Paris. The change from his monotonous and solitary existence in the country to the movement and animation of the capital—from the companionship of an austere father, and a home which must latterly have become a Port Royal in miniature, to the witty, cultured and brilliant society of Parisian salons—from morbid religious introspection to the free cultivation of philosophy, poetry and *belles lettres*—from the devout treatises of Jansen and St. Cyran to

¹ *Vie de Madame Perier. Pens., Havet, i. lxxviii.*

the *Essais* of Montaigne and the dramas of Molière—must have been almost overwhelming, especially on an organization so nervously sensitive to external influences as was Pascal's. We are hardly surprised to find, therefore, that after a residence of some twelve or eighteen months in Paris, the first enthusiasm of his conversion began to cool, that the exhortations of Singlier and his sister Jacqueline lost by degrees their customary effect, that Pascal gradually joined the gay world, which on its intellectual side possessed so many fascinations for a keen, subtle thinker like himself. His mind was clearly of too comprehensive a nature, his reasoning faculties too bold, restless and far-sighted to be cooped up for life within the bounds of a narrow religious system like that of Jansenism. Had his physical powers been more on a par with those of his intellect, the remainder of his career would have presented characteristics very different from those which we shall find it to possess.

Contemporaneously with Pascal's increasing alienation from Port Royal, and in a great measure the effect of it, was his progress to comparative health. Excessive religious excitement on a frame so delicate was not only injurious but absolutely fatal. Mixing quietly in the society and amusements of Paris would have been the precise treatment which a physician of our own day would have prescribed for an overwrought brain like Pascal's, and the result in his case proves the salutary effect of such advice. His father died in 1651, and left him in easy circumstances, which enabled him still further to enjoy the life and gaiety of Paris. For the next three years he seems to have launched out into amusements and extravagances of various kinds. He lived in a sumptuous and well-furnished house, kept a large establishment of servants, was accustomed to take the air in a coach of four or six horses, collected about him young men who though witty and fascinating were not always of the most reputable character,¹ indulged occasionally in gambling and other fashionable but frivolous amusements, frequented different *salons*—in short, took his part as a man of wealth and fashion in the gay life of the gayest capital in Europe. How far this course of dissipation overstepped the bounds of morality is a moot point on which Pascal's critics differ. Madame Perier and her daughter are anxious to throw a veil over these few years, and their anxiety is both comprehensible and pardonable.² On the other hand, certain Jesuit writers speak of Pascal's immorality as a matter beyond dispute. The most we can

¹ On Pascal's gay companions, comp. Ste Beuve, *Port Royal*; and M. Lelut, *L'Amulette de Pascal*, note vii. p. 234.

² Comp. passages quoted in Cousin's *Études*, from *Le Recueil d'Utrecht*, pp. 481, 482.

say is that the evidence is indirect, and that the case admits only of a fair presumption. As M. Lelut reminds us, it was an age of gallantry, and it is probable that one who entered so fully into its spirit shared to a certain extent in its freedom of manners. Both Cousin and Ste Beuve¹—the most impartial of Pascal's critics—intimate not obscurely their opinion of his guilt. According to the former, Pascal's *Discourse on the Passions of Love* betrays a familiarity with its subject not altogether Platonic,² at least no one can read it without perceiving that its tone of healthy animalism is in completest contrast to the morbid asceticism of later years. Perhaps it would be rash to make Pascal's written opinions on the subject the transcript of actual conduct, but certainly the *Discourse* contains maxims which supply ample room and verge enough for the imputed immorality. Hence if his life was characterized throughout by purity and moral austerity it was not for want of a theory which would have lent itself to a very different course of conduct. He had moreover admitted to his sister Jacqueline, as appears by a letter of hers, the existence of what she terms 'horrible attachments,' though we must remember that to her ascetic disposition and Jansenist training very ordinary and very innocent attachments would appear 'horrible.' What especially weighs with me in the consideration of this point is Pascal's own temperament, and his nervous organization—he was essentially a man of extremes. To the dominating passion of the moment he yielded himself with scarce an attempt at self-restraint. I quite admit that *cæteris paribus*, the preponderating elements in his character would incline to virtue, but the seductions of a Parisian life were probably beyond his powers of resistance.³ At least, the religious ascetic who could undergo so rapid a trans-

¹ Cousin, *Études*, pp. 479–480. Ste Beuve, *P. R.*, ii. p. 500, note 2.

² Comp. e.g., 'Les passions qui sont les plus convenables à l'homme et qui en renferment beaucoup d'autres sont l'amour et l'ambition. . . . Qu'une vie est heureuse quand elle commence par l'amour et qu'elle finit par l'ambition! Si j'avais à en choisir une, je prendrais celle-là. . . . A mesure que l'on a plus d'esprit les passions sont plus grandes. . . . Dans une grande âme tout est grande. . . . Nous naissons avec un caractère d'amour dans nos cœurs, qui se développe à mesure que l'esprit se perfectionne et qui nous porte à aimer ce qui nous paraît beau sans que l'on nous ait jamais dit ce que c'est. Qui doute après cela si nous sommes au monde pour autre chose que pour aimer? . . . L'homme n'aime pas à demeurer avec soi; cependant il aime: il faut donc qu'il cherche ailleurs de quoi aimer il ne le peut trouver que dans la beauté. . . . La beauté est partagée en mille différentes manières, le sujet le plus propre pour la soutenir c'est une femme. . . . L'homme est né pour le plaisir; il le sent; il n'en faut point d'autre preuve. Il suit donc sa raison en se donnant au plaisir. . . . A force de parler d'amour on devient amoureux. Il n'y a rien si aisé. C'est la passion la plus naturelle à l'homme.'—*Pens.*, etc., Faugère, i. p. 105, etc.; Cousin, *Études*, p. 475.

³ The extreme asceticism of Pascal's later years seems to throw a reflected

formation into a man of fashion and gaiety, for that evolution is admitted by all, was clearly capable of other transmutations and developments equally extravagant and not quite so innocent. But it would be a great mistake to suppose that Pascal's life was for any length of time utterly sensual or frivolous; for in addition to other restraints, his own mental restlessness and love of enquiry demanded their satisfaction. In connexion with this intellectual stimulus it is important to note the un-Jansenist tendencies of his thoughts and studies during this epoch, as shown by several of his smaller works. Thus in 'the Preface to his Treatise on the Vacuum,' he adopts the tone of Cartesian rationalism in the strongest possible contrast with the fanatical hatred of philosophy which marks the *Thoughts*, and more in unison with the views of Nicole and Arnauld. Here Authority and Reason are each assigned a distinct domain and jurisdiction of its own. The former rules over the realm of theology, while to Reason is assigned all the remaining provinces of the human intellect.¹ Reason is also here said to have for its object the search and discovery of hidden truths, and those that depend on it are called dogmatic. In these researches Pascal claims for Reason complete liberty both from the prejudices of ancients and the bias of moderns. Humanity, in its continuous progress, ought to be regarded as an indivisible being always existing and always learning. Those we call ancients are in reality neophytes in all things, and compose properly speaking the infancy of the race,² and as we have added to their requirements the experience of the centuries which followed them, it is in ourselves that the antiquity we reverence in others is to be found. This attribute of progressiveness marks the distinction between human reason and the instinct of lower animals. Not less remarkable is the very different manner, compared with that of the *Thoughts*, in which Pascal discusses Nature, her power, wisdom and goodness. Not only in the work just mentioned, but in others of his minor writings of nearly the same date (*e.g. De l'Ésprit Geometrique, de l'Art de Persuader*³) he points out that Nature has wonderfully provided for the wants of man both intellectual and physical. She supplies the conceptions on which the mathematician expends his

light on this part of his career. His assertion, *e.g.*, that health had more dangers for him than sickness is probably more than the hasty utterance of a hypochondriac. The following passage from Madame Perier is also significant: 'Si je disais quelquefois par occasion que j'avais vu une belle femme, il se fâchait et me disait qu'il ne fallait jamais tenir ces discours devant des laquais ni de jeunes gens parce que je ne savais pas quelles pensées je pourrais exciter par là en eux.' *Vie; Pens.*, Hav., i. lxxxii.

¹ *Pens.*, etc., Faugère, i. p. 93.

² *Ibid.*, p. 98.

³ Faugère, *ibid.*, pp. 121 and 153.

mental labour, she furnishes problems to the philosopher, in a word she, like a beneficent deity, administers good to all. Indeed Pascal's enthusiasm here as elsewhere inclines to extremes. In a passage which has well been compared to J. J. Rousseau, he proclaims Nature as 'the only good,' and proves his assertion by showing how her greatest benefits are precisely those which are most common. What mortals lack is not a substitute for Nature, but simply the best methods of discerning rightly the advantages she proffers for their acceptance. These works form a distinct proof that naturalism and rationalism continued to be potent influences in Pascal's intellect, until they in common with all other divergent methods and principles were finally absorbed in the mysticism of the *Thoughts*. Besides these questions of philosophy and theology, Pascal again took up his mathematical and mechanical studies. He corresponded actively with M. Fermat on questions of geometrical analyses, solved for one of his gay companions a problem about bets, devised sundry wheel conveniences as *e.g.* a Bath chair, and prospected the 'omnibus.' Our main concern however is with another department of Pascal's intellectual activity, for it was during these years of lax life in Paris that he first became acquainted with Montaigne's *Essais*. Independently of the fact that the book would not have been likely to attract the attention either of the young mathematician immersed in abstract science, or the young Jansenist convert, bound helplessly to the chariot-wheels of Calvin's sombre and narrow theology, it is very improbable that it would have been found among the books of M. Etienne Pascal. But when the young thinker entered the gay world of Paris, his acquaintance with 'the breviary of the man of fashion' was inevitable. The book took possession of his mind with a fascination he could not resist and which he was afterwards never able to shake off. M. Ste Beuve terms this period of free life and thought 'an interregnum between two conversions.'¹ It seems to me that the period in which he experienced the awakening effect of Montaigne is very unaptly designated by a word which implies a throne vacant. Certainly Montaigne deposed Jansen in Pascal's intellect and affections, but for the time he reigned as despotically as his predecessor had done. It would be truer to say that Pascal underwent those conversions, two religious convulsions by the instrumentality of Port Royal, and one philosophical awakening by means of Montaigne's *Essais*. Few momentous changes in the mental life of great thinkers are more remarkable than Montaigne's influence on Pascal. Few show more forcibly the unforeseen and apparently anomalous manner in which the mind receives and reacts upon influences from without. Cer-

¹ *Port Royal*, ii. p. 500.

tainly at first sight, there could be no greater contrasts than the Gascon Seigneur and Young Pascal. In their temperament, their education, their surroundings, the whole current of their lives, they seemed, with the single exception of a fondness for intellectual pursuits, radically opposed to each other. While Young Montaigne was brought up as the foster-child of poor villagers on his father's estate, and therefore with all imaginable freedom, Pascal was subjected to the severe restraint of a pious family circle, and the austerity of a father who was also a stern tutor. While the former was solacing idle hours in the fields with Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the latter was employed in a garret on his 'bars' and 'rounds.' Looking at their future as free-thinkers, we might say of Montaigne that he learnt what freedom was by being suffered to run wild, while Pascal acquired some idea of it by beating at the bars of his cage. Montaigne was early launched on the world with liberty to do almost as he pleased, while Pascal only left his abstract studies to be involved for a time in the religious excesses of Jansenism. Nor is the contrast less in the characters of the grown men. Montaigne is sprightly and frivolous; Pascal's earnestness is terrible. Montaigne adopts in everything the mean, not because it is absolutely the best, still less because he has arrived at it by laborious argument, but simply because it is nearest, involves less trouble, and is therefore more suited to his easy-going temperament—Pascal on the contrary pursues everything to extremes. In his thoughts and speculations, in his reveries and fancies, in the employments and various conjunctures of his life, his ardour admits of no hesitation, compromise or moderation. Further, Montaigne's joyous naturalism is separated by a measureless interval from the somewhat gloomy fanaticism of his disciple. The chief point of contact between them was the skepticism common to both; though with the difference that Montaigne's arose entirely from philosophical considerations, while Pascal's was the outcome to a great extent of religious feeling. In this respect Pascal's philosophic conversion started from precisely the same point as his Jansenistic enthusiasm, for he discovered that the 'Breviary of men of fashion' preached the same doctrine which he had already acquired from the devotional guides of Port Royal, viz., the utter weakness and fallibility of man. The only difference was, that what in the one case was a religious sentiment based upon personal experience and introspection, became in the other a philosophical truth, the inference of a broad induction in every department of human knowledge and history. To an intellect like Pascal's this difference in the presentation and scope of his old doctrine must have invested it with additional charms, while its capability of being translated from

the region of religious feeling to that of rationalistic philosophy—from the church to the lecture room or the *salon*—must have been regarded by him as a remarkable confirmation of its truth. Of course in their application of the doctrine the natural divergencies in the two men betray themselves; for while Pascal regards the weakness and wretchedness of man with a horror approaching misanthropy and despair, Montaigne contemplates it with a half-cynical half-amused glance as a quaint and curious puzzle, demanding and at the same time defying solution. To this subject I shall have to return presently when we have the teaching of Pascal's *Thoughts* before us.

But Pascal found another element in Montaigne's *Essais* almost as fascinating as his skepticism, *i.e.* its rationalism. Notwithstanding the depth of his religious feelings, we have seen that Pascal's intellect in its natural condition was keen, restless, powerful, independent—demanding aliment and satisfaction as imperiously as did his religious sentiment. Part of the seductive power which mathematics exercised on him came from its claim to prove and demonstrate unconditionally the problems it undertook. Early in life, as we saw, Pascal wished to know the causes of things, and was dissatisfied with those he deemed imperfect. Now whatever Jansenism effected towards satisfying his religious and emotional needs, it certainly did nothing to allay purely intellectual cravings. On the other hand, not only did it disclaim any such intention, but declared by its chief authorities that to attempt to satisfy the curiosity of the Reason was an actual sin—an offence against God. During his Jansenist enthusiasm, therefore, Pascal felt obliged to suppress forcibly his love for secular knowledge; indeed his own tendency to extremes carried him further in the direction of intellectual asceticism than other leaders of the Port Royal thought necessary. Both Arnauld and Nicole were philosophers as well as Pascal, and they regarded Descartes with as much deference as he did Montaigne; but they were men of well-balanced intellects and dogmatic instincts, and it is to this fact¹ we must ascribe their refusal to push the Jansenist doctrine of human fallibility to the skeptical extent which Pascal did. In the state of mental prostration in which his religious excesses left him, Pascal found in Epictetus, Charron, and especially in Montaigne's *Essais*, a feast of fat things; food of the strong rationalistic kind which he desiderated and which he devoured with the zest which comes of long abstinence. Montaigne was clearly better adapted to supply Pascal's intellectual cravings than Descartes, for independently of the personal feeling he entertained against him, Montaigne as a reasoner was more keen, analytical and thorough-going than

¹ Comp. Cousin, *Études*, pp. 85, 86.

Descartes. Besides, the elaborate construction which the latter was erecting on the frail basis of his own infallibility was repugnant to an intellect which regarded every human authority as a stupendous falsehood; and considered the universe not a fitting object of research, but of awed and reverent silence.¹ So great on the other hand was Pascal's deference to Montaigne, that he attempted even to copy his style and manner; at least he remarks of Epictetus, Montaigne and himself,² that their mode of writing is that which is most common, which is most insinuating, remains longest in the memory, and is oftenest quoted, because it is composed of reflections originated by the ordinary intercourse of life. Of course, in respect of chastened diction, of compact reasoning, of finished neatness and literary polish, there is as much difference between the garrulous Gascon and the author of the *Provincials* as between Pepys' *Diary* and one of Addison's most finished contributions to the *Spectator*.

We have thus seen what Pascal's social and literary environment was during the eventful years 1648-1654. I have dwelt upon this more at length because it is the seed-time of which we shall bye and bye reap the harvest of the *Provincials* and the *Thoughts*. It is indeed impossible to lay too much stress upon the varied lessons which those years had taught him—the deeper insight into his own nature—the larger acquaintance with the world and 'society,' and thereby of the characters of his fellow-men—a profounder estimate of the strange complexities of existence—the more intimate knowledge of the theories and practical working of ecclesiastical, political and social systems, which he thereby acquired. The general result may be described as a painful but needed dis-illusion. He had come to the Parisian world a religious devotee; he retired from it a religious skeptic. The clear running stream of his pietistic convictions and simple earnest life had become fouled, or at least discoloured, by the rush into it of more than one swoln 'freshet' and turbulent confluent, and though it thus attained greater breadth and vigour, it lost for ever its fresh pristine hue. Like Adam, Pascal had also learnt wisdom by his fall. Parisian life and Montaigne's *Essais* combined had given him the 'knowledge of good and evil.' His education as a philosopher and thinker, a student of men as well as of books, was now complete. He was fully qualified to enter the

¹ Cousin, *Études*, p. 299.

² Under the pseudonym of Salomon de Tultie. This has been discovered both by the Rev. C. Beard (see his *Port Royal*, vol. ii. p. 71, note) and by M. Chavannes, an Amsterdam pastor, to be an anagram of Louis de Montalte, another pseudonym of Pascal's, under cover of which he wrote the *Provincials*. Cf. Havet, *Pens.*, i. 101, note 3.

arena of philosophical as well as religious discussion. Both the *Provincial Letters* and the *Thoughts* owed much of their power to—indeed were only rendered possible by—this Parisian episode in his career and the many-sided instruction it imparted.

But we are now nearing another of those mental cyclones which filled so great a space in Pascal's life, and which, as we have already seen, changed so completely its course. Towards the end of 1654 he was still living the life of fashion, intellectualism and skepticism in which we have just been contemplating him. He intended apparently to continue in it for the remainder of his life, for he thought of buying an appointment, marrying, and settling down as a citizen of the gay world, when, to use his niece's devout expression, 'the Lord who had pursued him so long,' suddenly stopped him.

One day in the month of October or November, Pascal, according to his custom, was taking a drive with some friends in his carriage, drawn by four or six horses, along the bridge of Neuilly. The day was a fête day, and the streets were crowded with people intent on its religious observances. Pascal in his pompous equipage, and with gay companions, was probably not in completest harmony with the occasion. Perhaps he had come to regard open churches, ringing of bells, crowds of worshippers, with the apathetic listlessness becoming a man of quality, the disciple of Montaigne, the associate of the chevalier de Méré, M. Miton, and other notorious 'men about town'—the frequenter of fashionable *salons*. His thoughts might possibly have been engaged in his future prospects—his proposed marriage, or his hoped-for appointment—when suddenly his career, life itself, was on the verge of extinction. The two front horses, through some sudden fright, started, took their bits between their teeth, and rushed headlong towards a part of the bridge of Neuilly which was unprotected by a parapet. One moment more, Pascal, his friends, and his grand equipage would have been plunged in the flood, when providentially the traces and reins which joined the frightened horses to their companions snapped, and they alone were precipitated into the river beneath, leaving the carriage almost suspended on the brink of the bridge. Such an accident and escape would have produced considerable effect on a man of fairly strong nerves; on the feeble frame and sensitive organization of Pascal the effect was naturally stupendous. He fainted away, and it was some time before he regained consciousness. This was not the age, nor was Pascal the man, likely to consider such a deliverance as a not uncommon accident which might have happened to anyone. As regards himself, in addition to his own nervous organization, he belonged to a race

in which superstition in some of its grossest forms was part of the family creed.¹ All the circumstances of the case combined to intensify the marvellous and supernatural character of the event. Such a nervous shock must have been followed in a case like his by considerable mental and physical prostration. During this time he gradually withdrew from the world, took smaller and more retired lodgings, probably gave up the sumptuous carriage and spirited horses which had so nearly cost him his life, and in other respects manifested his full persuasion that God had again called him as distinctly as he had St. Paul when on his headlong persecuting path to Damascus.

Under these circumstances of religious awe and nervous excitation it is not wonderful at least to me that another extraordinary event occurred which completed this his second conversion. What this actually was we shall never know. It may have been as M. Lelut supposes, a vision or hallucination arising from diseased and shaken nerves, or it may have been what Ste Beuve and others declare it, a fit of devotional ecstasy such as mystics, illuminati, and extreme religionists have in all ages been privileged to enjoy. Whatever it was, we possess the enigmatic record Pascal gave of it in the remarkable form of the amulet to which we have alluded. This amulet was found after his death sewn up by himself in the lining of his waistcoat, and must have been transferred from one garment to another during the last seven years of his life. It consisted of two slips, one of paper, the other of parchment, folded closely together, on each of which was inscribed the same series of religious and apparently disconnected ejaculations. (You may see fac-similes in MM. Faugère and Lelut's books there lying on the table.) They allude to some extraordinary occurrence which befel Pascal on the night of the 3rd of November at 6.30 p.m., about a fortnight or three weeks after the Neuilly-Bridge accident. It would be rash, I think, to make any undue deductions from this remarkable document.² M.

¹ M. Pascal senior was a devout believer in sorcery and witchcraft, and Blaise himself, when an infant, was thought to have been bewitched. See the curious narrative in Havet, *Pensées*, i. p. cii.

² Pascal's amulet, with its incoherent phrases and ejaculations, has formed the text for a wonderful variety of comments:—M. Lelut takes every sentence as a separate stage in the progress of a long vision or hallucination, the conjoint effect of religious excitement and cerebral disease. See *L'Amulette de Pascal*, p. 145, etc. M. Ste Beuve assumes it to be the record of religious ecstasy. To use his own words, Pascal's conversion was the result 'd'une âme touchée non point d'un cerveau ébranlé.'—*P. R.*, ii. 503. Dr. Reuchlin thinks the record is not one of mere feeling, but indicates intellectual conviction as well; he says, 'Gewissen und Vernunft erscheinen auch hier als eine für ihn unzertrennliche Macht.'—*Pascal's Leben*, p. 54.

Lelut has constructed an ingenious hypothesis of the incident to which it refers which has the disadvantage of being too elaborate. At the same time I agree with him, that the physical cause of the occurrence (I am far from thinking there were no causes of any other kind) was the nervous shock he had experienced by the Neuilly-Bridge accident.¹ It is said that for the rest of his life Pascal always saw an abyss on one side of his chair or his carriage. The existence of such a hallucination seems to me to have a high probability from the nature of the case, though the evidence for it is not so clear as might be wished.

But whatever the incident of the 3rd of November might have been, it combined with the nervous excitement caused by the accident to alter entirely his mode of life. He began again to visit Port Royal, to hold long conferences with his sister Jacqueline, to listen to Singlier's sermons, in short, to return once more to the Jansenism which he had forsaken. On his first conversion he was the moving spirit and guiding hand which led his sister to Port Royal. This time she assumed the leadership over her brother, and induced him to forsake finally and for ever the worldly life he had been leading, for the religious retirement and cloistered peace of her chosen home. Pascal joined Port Royal, never more to leave it, in the thirty-first or thirty-second year of his life.²

Thus was accomplished his second religious, or speaking generally the third great mental, cataclysm of his life. The change was in this instance rendered easier because it appealed to associations and sentiments by which he had once been so profoundly stirred, and to tendencies so deeply rooted in his nature that no amount of neglect or disuse could have altogether destroyed them. Pascal entered upon his new life with all the enthusiasm of his nature. He discharged the duties which the rules of the community imposed upon him—made his own bed, brought his meals from the kitchen, and refused to employ servants to do anything which he could possibly do him-

¹ It is now said that the accident only accelerated a resolution he had already been making for the preceding twelve months to quit the world, of which he is said to have become quite tired (see Letter of Jacqueline Pascal in *Ste Beuve*, *P. R.*, ii. p. 504); but we learn from other sources that when the event happened he was contemplating marriage and settling in Paris. Pascal's enthusiastic nature might easily have exaggerated momentary qualms of conscience or fits of ennui which a man of his temperament must have occasionally experienced, and his sister's ardent nature would lead her to lay more stress on such confessions than they really merited. At least when a philosopher thinks four or six horses needful to draw his carriage for an ordinary airing, contempt for worldly state and grandeur is not the precise quality which most men would attribute to him.

² *Ste Beuve*, *P. R.*, ii. p. 508.

self. Later on too, his excessive austerities and privations became so great that they undoubtedly helped to bring the brief remnant of his life to a close. But at its commencement he declared the change to have been favourable to his bodily health. Even his asceticism he asserted to be physically beneficial to him. But in natures such as Pascal's we must be cautious in receiving their own testimony as to their health. Disordered nerves have, as is well known, a faculty of counterfeiting very different states both physical and psychical, and the ecstasy of the mystic with all its rapture is by no means an acceptable or trustworthy proof of good physical health.

But the newest and most celebrated convert to Port Royal was not content to be a passive or idle member of the little community. He soon began to take an absorbing interest in its growth and prosperity. At present it was in considerable danger. On the 27th of May, 1653, Pope Innocent X. had formally condemned the five propositions which were regarded as the four corner and one central pillar of Jansen's doctrinal system, though they are not contained in so many words in that writer's inculpatory treatise, the *Augustinus*. This decree, foreshadowing as it did the ruin of Port Royal, created a wonderful excitement among the Jesuits. They celebrated the victory in the same fashion as the Peripatetics of Paris, nearly a century before, had exulted over Ramus and the condemnation of his Anti-Aristotelian works.¹ Arnauld had also been condemned by the Sorbonne for maintaining that the five propositions were not to be found in Jansen's book. The Jesuits had therefore a double triumph over Port Royal. But into the midst of their hosts, thus clamorously rejoicing over the twofold victory, there suddenly fell—like a thunderbolt out of a clear sky—a terrible bombshell, scattering havoc, destruction and dismay on every side. In other words, Pascal had launched against them the first of his *Provincial Letters*.

This famous work, which still occupies a foremost rank both among French classics and the controversial writings of modern Europe, does not come directly within the scope of our inquiry. 1st. It is a polemical work, written for hostile and party purposes, and every such work must, from the nature of the case, be an imperfect exponent of its author's real views. The attention of the controversialist is absorbed by the system or cause to be attacked, and comparatively little heed is given to his own conclusions, or the grounds on which they are based. No painter who wished to represent a man in his normal condition would choose to depict him on the point of attacking a fortress, or otherwise carried away by some overmastering passion. In the *Provincials*, Pascal as the David of Port Royal, challenges

¹ See 'Ramus,' *ante*, p. 506.

and assaults the Philistine Jesuits. In the *Thoughts* he is the philosopher and theologian meditating in his easy chair, or at least in the easiest posture which his asceticism and nervous disorders would allow him to adopt.

Besides, in the *Provincials* Pascal is in reality what the Jesuits styled him—the Secretary of the Port Royal. The *Letters* are manifestos of a community rather than the self-revelation of the author's own mind. Arnauld and Nicole¹ had occasionally a hand in their composition. In nearly every case they revised and approved them before they went to press. They sometimes suggested their subjects, and supplied him with references to controversial books bearing on those subjects. The incomparable style and diction are no doubt Pascal's. His also are the keen polished satire, the exquisite irony, the vigorous declamation, the persuasive eloquence of the work; but the substance of the arguments belongs generally to the Port Royal.² For our purpose the main interest of the book hinges on its occasional revelations of Pascal's mind, and the way in which he considers the dogmatic system of Rome and the Jesuits.

In his preparatory studies for the work, in the discussions which arose out of it, and in his conversations with Port-Royalist friends concerning it, Pascal had come into fuller contact with Romanist dogma than he had ever done before. It is true he professes to consider Jesuitism as an excrescence of the Church, but the hypothesis is merely adopted as a *ruse de guerre*. The pope had anathematized Jansen. The Sorbonne had condemned Arnauld. The Jesuits were continually attacking and calumniating Port Royal. In his eyes all these authorities were integral parts of a common system. If there was a difference between Jesuitism and the Church, it was one of degree, not of kind. All the abuses he discovers and fearlessly exposes as the outcome of Jesuistry, he had quite keenness enough to perceive were developments of germs and tendencies deeply seated in the very constitution of Papal Christianity. The divergences from the truth and simplicity of the Gospel were as common to one as to the other. The stress upon words—the trivial and unmeaning distinctions, as, *e.g.*, between 'proximate Power' and 'efficacious Grace'—the perverted logic, were only developments of principles he might have detected in every stage of Romanist dogmatic growth. Even the chief count in his formidable indictment, that infamous casuistry, so admirably contrived for reversing all the characteristic

¹ Especially the latter. He is said to have improved Letters 2, 8, 13 and 14, and supplied both plan and materials for the 9th, 11th and 12th. Gartz, in Ersch und Grueber, *Encyclop.*, Sect. iii. vol. xii., Art. 'Pascal.'

² Cf. Ste Beuve, *P. R.*, iii. p. 76.

principles of Christianity, and every precept of its morality, and licensing every excess of human lust and passion under the holy name of religion, was only a natural corollary of the execrable policy which made correct belief of higher importance than purity of life. Jesuitism, with all its turpitude, was the impure daughter of an impure mother, and from a philosophical point of view the *Provincial Letters*, while ostensibly aimed at the former, were in reality levelled at the latter. The abuse with which extreme Romanists have since overwhelmed the book¹ is a sufficient proof of their recognition of its true significance, and *ipso facto* an acknowledgment of the truth of Pascal's charges. The controversy of the *Provincials* thus imparted to our skeptic an insight into what we may call the Dogma factory of the Romish Church. He saw the gradual evolution of authoritative beliefs from germs of a very mingled and suspicious character. He watched the transformation of the growth of one seed, so that it should become the apparent development of another. He noticed the locus pocus by which principles changed their names, so that what was in reality worldly ambition and aggrandisement was denominated a pious regard for the Church—how greed and avarice were similarly pronounced to be affection for Christ's poor—how lust and immorality were declared venial sins, and quite expiable by a little of that gold which had become the highest of Christian virtues, the panacea for every disease of the soul. He observed how words were no longer the signs of, but substitutes for, realities. He noticed how dogmas were arbitrarily promulgated and as arbitrarily relaxed, how unbelieving rectitude was crushed while believing turpitude was honoured, how a Borgia was enthroned, while a Bruno was burnt. In short, he saw the amalgamation of the various materials in that huge witches' cauldron of impiety, their gradual concoction by the baleful fires of human lust and passion, their fatal effect on all who tasted the poisonous brewage. Indeed, as a powerful 'Dissuasive from Popery,' I do not know any work in the present day equal to Pascal's *Provincial Letters*, to a man capable of understanding the real drift and purport of its argument. At the same time, through a mistaken idea of the value of outward unity, the Port-Royalist leaders, the men who drew up the damning indictment of the *Provincial Letters*, had no desire to break abruptly with popery. Indeed, our skeptic, with all his severe strictures against Jesuit duplicity, is not quite

¹ On the other hand moderate and cultured Romanists have not been backward to recognize its merits; e.g., it is related of Bossuet that when asked what book next to his own works he would rather have written, replied without hesitation, the *Provincial Letters*. Reuchlin, *Port Royal*, i. p. 636.

free from disingenuousness in his efforts to prove that there was no real opposition between the decrees of the Papacy and the characteristic doctrines of Port Royal. Because, *e.g.*, the five inculpatated propositions were not to be found in Jansen's treatise formally and *totidem verbis*, both Pascal and Arnauld were not ashamed to argue with a laxity analogous to that of Peter in Swift's well-known 'Tale' that they were not there at all, whereas, to use Bossuet's words, 'They are the very soul of the book.'¹ Unworthy of Pascal and Port Royal are also the subterfuges and puerile distinctions of the 17th and 18th *Provincials*, which in reality prove no more than the inconsistent anxiety of the writers to be regarded as part of that Church against which they produced such a crushing accusation. The lapse of a few more years, and further matured consideration, enabled Pascal to brush aside these flimsy casuistical cobwebs; and he describes such disingenuous subtleties in their true colours as 'abominable in the sight of God and despicable before men.' With the true earnest conviction of Protestantism he thereupon appeals from the Church, with its decrees and condemnations, to the tribunal of Jesus Christ.² This avowal of manlier sentiment and adoption of more open tactics produced a rupture between Pascal and Arnauld which lasted for some years.

Besides, the Jesuit principles whose laxity Pascal depicted in such strong colours, clearly pointed to and were based upon skepticism—a skepticism however more ethical than speculative, and which was hypocritically masked by a semblance of orthodox belief and moral purity. Indirectly, therefore, Jesuit casuistry pointed in the direction of Montaigne's unbelief which Pascal himself, while transferring it from the *Essais* to his own *Thoughts*, from the world to the cloister, and making it contributory to asceticism instead of self-indulgence, established as the primary article of his creed. Montaigne's fluctuating faith and lax manners made him, in fact, a prototype of the Escobar-trained Jesuit of the *Provincials*—minus the hypocrisy—and we might say of the *Essais* what La Fontaine said of Escobar's casuistry:—

'Chemin pierreux est grand rêverie
Montagne sait un chemin de velours.'³

¹ Lettre a Maréchal de Bellefonds. *Œuv. Comp.*, x. p. 632: 'Je crois donc que les propositions sont véritablement dans Jansénius, et qu'elles sont l'âme de son livre. Tout ce qu'on a dit au contraire me paroît une pure chicane.'

² Cf. Ste Beuve, *P. R.*, iii. p. 89. *Pens.*, Havet, ii. 118: 'Si mes lettres sont condamnées à Rome, ce que j'y condamne est condamné dans le Ciel. *Ad tuum, Domine Jesu, tribunal appello.*'

³ La Fontaine, *Ballades*, iv. 'Sur Escobar.' *Œuv. Comp.*, ed. Hachette, vol. ii. p. 484.

What Pascal did was to take the 'chemin de velours' and transmute it into the 'chemin pierreux' of Port-Royal asceticism.

This relation of Pascal to the Jesuits is not altogether unlike that of the traditional Sokrates to the Sophists. Both men were free-thinkers; searchers after truth and incredulous of human power to attain it. But both set themselves vehemently against a libertine and unprincipled excess of freedom, especially in morality. Both were opposed to thinkers and teachers who in one case reputedly, in the other undoubtedly, made the sacred cause of freedom a stalking horse for interested ambition and degrading selfishness.

But before leaving this part of our subject, we may note in passing the remarkable difference between Pascal and the only other name in the history of French Free Thought which is closely connected with the Jesuits; I mean Bishop Huet of Avranches.

The origin of Pascal's antagonism to the Jesuits was the polemical attitude which they had assumed towards Port Royal. He was the defender of his chosen community, the home of his devout and beloved sister, and of his warmest and closest friends. But this position became somewhat modified in the course of the controversy. He discovered that Jesuitism was opposed not only to an isolated religious community in the France of the seventeenth century, but it was also opposed to Christianity, to its most essential principles and teachings, to the dicta of the wisest among the Schoolmen and Fathers. He found that their casuistry undermined every social law, and relaxed every moral restraint. The contest therefore assumed to Pascal's wonted earnestness, a gravity and importance which could not be overrated. It was an episode in the perpetual struggle of Truth against Falsehood,¹ Christianity against Worldliness, God against Satan.

Huet's relation with the Jesuits, as indeed his mental character, was of a very different nature. Educated in their schools, associated with them through life, dying among them, his estimate of the order, their principles, and general practice, was cordially appreciative. With a much wider range of culture than Pascal's, with emotional and religious susceptibilities less strongly marked, not to mention an unusually vigorous constitution, he took a broader, and though a bishop, a more secular view of things than Pascal's nervous temperament allowed him to take. What Pascal in his sectarian narrowness or devout irritability would regard as wrong teaching, a premium upon duplicity and hypocrisy, Huet would esteem a needful concession to human weakness, to the complexities of modern social

¹ 'C'est une étrange et longue guerre que celle où la violence essaye d'opprimer la vérité.'—*Prov.*, Lett. xii.

systems, to the ambitious and powerful part which he thought Jesuitism was destined to play in the future. To Pascal a loophole of escape from the few truths which he maintained as dogmas would have appeared a crime, while to Huet any path of freedom from dogmatic coercion would have been a needed relaxation, a reasonable discounting of assertions incapable of proof. To Pascal a doctrine of Probability, whether intellectual or ethical, was eminently repugnant.¹ Truth he could understand: earnest search for it he could appreciate; but an acquiescence in Probability, a position avowedly short of Truth, he would not tolerate.² Between absolute conviction and unqualified negation he could discern no medium point; on the other hand, to Huet's moderate, calm, self-restrained disposition, Probability was a point of vantage. It committed the holder of it to no unalterable decision, either affirmative or negative. Besides which it was, in very many subjects, the only possible position for a man who was cautious as well as thoughtful, the only conceivable solution of many a problem in Nature, or in humanity.³

Both were skeptics, both declared Pyrrhonism true, both pushed the doctrine of human fallibility to its furthest limits; but while Pascal's antidote and consolation was an intuitive conviction of and fervent trust in God, Huet's was belief in the *ex cathedra* teachings of the Church.

Both in reality professed Twofold Truth, both erected a barrier between Reason and Faith, though the opposition in one case was between intellectual truth and a deep personal sense of religion; in the other, between the *dicta* of philosophy and the dogmas of the Church.

Both were unaffectedly pious; though the religion of one was the narrow, half-sectarian pietism of Port Royal, while Huet's was that of a liberal Romanist bishop, genial, generous, sympathetic and large-hearted.

To carry the comparison one step further:—

Both 'died in Faith,' Pascal in the terrible throes of an acute

¹ Though Pascal was opposed to every doctrine of Probability, it may be as well to apprise the reader that the skeptical theory of Probability of the Academies is not identical with the Jesuit notion of Probabilism which Pascal so ably exposes in the *Provincials*. In the first case, the *most* probable opinion must be followed, and the measure of likelihood in the object is the measure of due conviction in the subject. In Jesuit Probabilism, on the other hand, the *least* probable opinion, or course of conduct, may be followed whenever it suits our wishes or convenience. Cf. *Prov.*, Letter v. and vi.

² 'Est-il probable,' he asks, 'que la *probabilité* assure?'—*Pens.*, Havet, ii. 97. For him Probability was merely a synonym of worldly complaisance.—*Pens.*, Hav., ii. 19.

³ Cf. Huet, *Traité de la Faiblesse*, Liv. ii. chap. 4.

and painful disease, while Huet placidly slept away with no other ailment than the natural decline of old age, the death in either case being the fitting termination of a life, in one instance so full of mental change and conflict, in the other, so marked by calm and serenity.

The success of the Provincial Letters was complete. As Ste Beuve remarks, they exterminated Scholasticism in morals just as Descartes had in metaphysics. Into the wild undergrowth of dialectic subtlety and perverse casuistry of Papal Christianity, as into an Indian jungle with its poisonous creepers, its deadly reptiles, and its mephitic exhalations, Pascal and his friends cut their way, by the keen weapon of Christian morality. Since the time of the *Provincials* Jesuitism has become the synonym of disingenuousness and equivocation, the concealment of lust and ambition beneath the saintly garb of religion. The book has been employed as a convenient repository of arguments whenever the order has since been attacked.¹ Ste Beuve ascribes the origin of Jesuit casuistry to Spain, the native country of its greatest doctors. In truth, it had a far more widely diffused origin. It was generated of the corruption of the Church, and was limited only by the bounds of her dominion. We have noticed the same fatal dichotomy of faith and life in Italy during the sixteenth century, and have seen how energetically Charron protested against it in France. It would be truer to say that Jesuit casuistry was the *ex post facto* code devised to justify dialectically what had already been adopted more or less effectively and completely. The disciples of Loyola were thus not the original founders of ecclesiastical corruption, which had existed for some centuries before his birth. That honour must be reserved for dogmatism and hierarchical ambition. They were its legists, its codifiers, its Numas and Justinians. They brought together and arranged its rules and precepts in orderly sequence and logical coherence. They also extended the limits of the science, applied their false scales and light weights to deeds and motives whose utter nefariousness had hitherto excluded them from the benefits of recognised ecclesiastical casuistry. The France of Louis XIV. was a hotbed of these crafty tactics. From the time of Charles IX. the Jesuits had acquired more power in France than all the other religious orders put together. They were father confessors to all the great families in the kingdom, and their easy complaisance in the exercise of these functions added to their popularity and extended their influence.² The king's confessor, Father Annat, to whom some of the later Provincial Letters were addressed, was an easy, pliant,

¹ Cf. Bayle, *Dict.*, 'Pascal,' note K.

² This was a frequent subject of satire and raillery among preachers and

good-natured director of the royal conscience. Parisian wits were not slow to comment upon the open licentiousness of the kingly pupil of the Jesuits.¹ But the corruption of manners was not confined to the court; it followed like serpent-slime the track of the Jesuits, and spread through the nobility into even the lowest strata of the bourgeois. Never therefore was a polemic more happily timed than the *Provincials*. Its appeals for purity of life, for religious consistency, touched a chord in the popular conscience, which, however long disused, was still capable of responding. The extent of its popularity may be partly estimated by the enthusiasm with which the representation of Molière's *Tartuffe* was received in Paris a few years after Pascal's death. That celebrated comedy is only a dramatised rendering of the *Provincials*, just as Racine remarked jestingly, 'the *Provincials* were only comedies.' Both the *Tartuffe* and the *Onceptive* of La Bruyère carried onward the cause and the teaching which Pascal had initiated in the *Provincials*, and placed its argument in a vivid and forcible form before the people.²

But not only did the Letters set free morality from the bonds, nominal and lax as they were, of casuistical refinements and logical subtleties, but they further aided the cause of human liberty by their

writers of the time. . . . The celebrated Père André, *e.g.* preaching on one occasion at Paris, thus humorously expounded the position and duties of the Jesuits: 'Le christianisme est comme une grande salade; les nations en sont les herbes; le sel, le vinaigre, les macérations, les docteurs; *vos estis sal terræ*; et l'huile, les bons pères Jésuites. Y a-t-il rien de plus doux qu'un bon père Jésuite? Allez à confesse à un autre, il vous dira: Vous êtes damné si vous continuez. Un Jésuite adoucira tout. Puis l'huile, pour peu qu'il en tombe sur un habit, s'y étend, et fait insensiblement une grande tache; mettez un bon père Jésuite dans une province, elle en sera enfin toute pleine.'—*Tallent des Reaux, Memoirs*, iv. p. 342.

¹ *E.g.* apropos of the king's change of mistresses, the following *Chanson* was current in Paris:—

" Father Annat is rude,
He tells me, time to time,
That *habitual sin*
Is a very great crime.
To please him, if I can,
I change La Vallière,
And take La Montespan."

Ste Beuve, *P. R.*, iii. p. 265.

² Compare Ste Beuve, *P. R.*, iii. chaps. xv. and xvi. It did not require a profound appreciation of ethical distinctions or of Divine justice to appraise the qualities and final destiny of what Pascal called 'Escobartine morality.' His own judgment is only the expression of rudimentary popular common-sense. 'Ridicule de dire qu'une récompense éternelle est offerte à des mœurs escobartines.'—*Pens.*, Hav., ii. 117.

stress upon the individual conscience. The tendency of scholastic morality, as of its philosophy and theology, was to systematise and refine, to compile directions for every detail of human duty, and to bring every action within the scope of a definite formula. Not that this dogmatism really aided Christian morality; on the contrary, it produced its usual debasing effect: for in proportion as definitions were multiplied and rules became more precise, in the same proportion were the ethical instincts of Christians weakened and destroyed. The manipulators of those systems were fully aware of the elastic nature of words and verbal propositions, and knew how easily the severity of any injunction might be modified by convenient distinctions; nor were they less alive to the advantage of retaining the human conscience in its wonted thralldom, by submitting its impulses and feelings to an external authoritative direction, and so suppressing its individuality. Pascal's work is a protest against this degrading bondage. To decisions of casuists, to the decrees of popes and councils, to the prescriptions of this or the other ethical quack, it opposes the individual conscience, the enlightened sentiment of every genuine Christian, free, independent, self-asserting, acknowledging responsibility only to God. It is thus a declaration and vindication of 'Protestantism in morality,' a protest against the confessional and its numberless abuses, an undermining, though Pascal was not far-sighted enough to perceive it, of the very foundation stone of Papal Christianity.

A more indirect but not less meritorious effect of the *Provincials* was to present with startling power the enormous abyss which divided Jesuit casuistry from the moral precepts of Jesus Christ. To most Romanists, especially those who lacked Jesuit teaching and guidance, the writings of Escobar, Sanchez and Emmanuel Sa were unknown. That the principles of popular confessors were lax was an easy inference from the lives which they regulated; but how lax they were, or under the same teaching were capable of becoming, was probably quite unknown to the average French Catholic before the publication of the *Provincials*. That supplied an available textbook on the subject. Thence might be seen in the very words of acknowledged authorities, the pernicious maxims, the slippery methods, the pitiful quibbles by which the simple directness of Christian morality had been disfigured and travestied. I do not know how far advocates of the doctrine of development would include moral as well as doctrinal growth within its scope. Some evolutionary hypothesis is certainly needed to connect teachers whose only apparent bond of union consists in the common name of Jesus. In reality, nothing could be wider apart than their teachings. The

doctrine of transubstantiation was not further removed from the primitive, informal rite of the Passover-supper, than the subtleties of Escobar are distant from the Sermon on the Mount. The process in both cases seems to have been a revolution rather than an evolution, a retrograde instead of a forward movement. The growth was not that of nature, it was not the development of the oak from the acorn, it was a kind of diabolical legerdemain which contrived to evoke thorns from the vine and thistles from the fig-tree.

Leaving now the *Provincials*, on which I have dwelt a little longer than I intended on account of its importance in the history of European thought, I come to Pascal's greatest work, the converging point of all the studies and tendencies of his life, the stormy sea into which the stream of his mental existence, with its various tributaries and confluents, finally pours itself—I mean, the *Thoughts*. Of all the self-revelations with which our skeptical researches bring us into contact, there are few so remarkable—not one so affecting—as Pascal's *Thoughts*. Descartes' *Discourse on Method* is a model of French style, but it is surpassed by the *Thoughts*. Montaigne's *Essais* are marked by keen analysis, which is however affected, and therefore exaggerated; Pascal's self-diagnosis is keener, and being unconscious, is also truer than Montaigne's.¹ Huet's *Treatise on the Weakness of the Human Reason* is ultra-skeptical and Pyrrhonian. Still more so, if that be possible, are Pascal's *Thoughts*. Each of the treatises I have named are in different degrees charged with inconsistencies. Perhaps the most inconsistent of all books ever published is the *Thoughts*. We have already seen the many-sidedness of Montaigne's *Essays*, but even this must, in my opinion, yield to the versatility of Pascal's *Thoughts*. Differing from the *Provincials*, which represent the Port Royalist and the advocate, the *Thoughts* give us the man himself in all his multiform aspects. He is the living embodiment of those strange, incoherent, diversiform utterances. His religious ecstasy, his devout abasement, his esteem for man's greatness, his disdain of his unworthiness, his regard for human achievements, his contempt for human fallibility, his incontrovertible certainty, his unconditional skepticism, his reverence for criterions and standards of truth, his profound conviction of their fallaciousness and worthlessness; in a word, all the contradictions which make up his composite character are here depicted with the unfailing force and vividness of his own pencil. The book is thus the pen-and-ink sketch of himself, rendered with the scrupulous accuracy

¹ It is a curious illustration of the unconsciousness of Pascal's self-portraiture, that he speaks of Montaigne's attempt as 'Le sot projet qu'il a de se peindre.'—*Pens.*, Havet, i. p. 80.

of a high-class photograph, but without its delicate shading. The fidelity is too great to admit of artistic idealization or refinement. The furrows and wrinkles, warts and spots, on his intellectual visage are rather intensified than subdued. The inconsistencies in Montaigne's sketch of himself are striking enough if duly analysed and considered apart, but with his moderate, equable mode of presenting them, they seem to shade off insensibly one into the other; at least there is no feeling of abruptness, no sudden wrench or revulsion of sentiment in contemplating their differences. With Pascal, on the other hand, every line and shade in the portraiture is decisive, violent and abrupt. The picture consists of Rembrandtesque lights and shadows—the former too brilliant, the latter too murky, to be natural or pleasing—passing, or I should say rushing headlong, into each other, without any gradation or interval whatever.

But the *Thoughts* are Pascal not only in their striking representation of his character. They also intimate most forcibly and painfully the circumstances of his later years. Composed in the quieter intervals of an acute and terrible disease, they bear the impress of their origin. Their introspection is clinical, their utterances pathological. Some of the short abrupt sentences—plaintive wails over human misery—read almost like articulate groans. The unfinished periods, the half-written words and syllables, seem to represent sudden attacks or paroxysms of pain. The halting expressions, broken sequences, disconnected utterances, the argument or line of thought so twisted and contorted, now snapped off, now clumsily rejoined, now utterly lost, are but the faithful reflex of a life restless, disjointed and misshapen by disease. The marginal emendations and additions, words and sentences obliterated, constant use of abbreviations and contractions, suggest the disquietude and restlessness of the patient. I once saw the original MS. of the *Pensées* still preserved in the National Library at Paris, and I must say I was painfully affected. With my knowledge of the attendant circumstances in the life of their author, it appeared to me a visible and tangible record of pain, weariness, mental excitation and physical prostration. The thought occurred to me that if it were possible to represent any book by an emblematical painting it would be this MS. It is, as Cousin calls it, a noble city in ruins, or better, it is a half-begun city with inexhaustible materials for its completion—not a Pagan city like Athens or Corinth, but a city in which the Christianity of its designer is clearly traceable; although not less clearly his Christianity appears of a novel and incongruous pattern. In its centre stand two great temples, one religious, the other skeptical; the first, a church dedicated to Jesus Christ, the second a 'Dissenting place of worship' erected to Pyrrhon

or Montaigne, but neither quite complete. Around are different buildings—a hospital, an asylum, an alms house—it was evidently meant to be a city of charity; and there is also the foundations of an Athenæum, so that it was clearly intended for a city of learning; but all the buildings are so incomplete that it is difficult to grasp their design and object. Combined with countless materials strewn about in inextricable confusion, they seem fragments of noble attempts unachieved, parts of an enormous whole of which it is doubtful whether even the designer has finally determined the use in each particular instance. Here stands an elegant shaft without base or capital. There, an ornamented capital without shaft or pedestal. Everywhere are scattered stones carefully hewn for places they never occupied, polished marble pillars which never found their right position, decorated cornices and pediments which were never erected. The *tout ensemble* presents an appearance of dire confusion. In most ancient ruins of towns once built and inhabited, the streets and boundaries are still definable amidst the wreck; here, so far as appears, there is no semblance of plan or design. No doubt a plan is in existence, not, perhaps, ‘drawn to scale’ and elaborated by the architect, but vaguely and imperfectly conceived *in petto*. At all events its purport is not easily inferrible from the fragments before us. Those who think it easy to arrange the *membra disjecta* of this literary monstrosity in something like order, will undoubtedly be undeceived by making the trial. Even M. Havet’s attempt, the best that has ever been made, perhaps the best which is possible, is by no means satisfactory.

The object of the work is not its least extraordinary feature. It was suggested by the supposed cure of Pascal’s niece, Mdlle. Perier, by means of ‘The Holy Thorn.’ Its aim was to establish on a double basis of philosophy and theology the Port-Royalist belief in miracles, and its characteristic doctrines, and at the same time to protest against the Cartesian rationalism which Arnauld and Nicole employed for the same apologetic purpose. There is, I am free to confess, a curious irony in the invocation of human imbecility to supply a basis for gross superstition, in the appeal to what some would term unreason, in order to escape the methods and decisions of right reason. Pascal employed his Pyrrhonism to justify belief in an event on which no sane man of our day would dream of pinning his faith for an instant, just as Glanvil adduced skepticism in order to establish the veracity of witchcraft. Those instances, however, do no more than prove that skepticism is not free from those abuses to which every good principle is liable.

Turning now to the skepticism which is the most marked characteristic of the *Thoughts*, we find it to have been of a very profound and

sweeping kind. Every conclusion of philosophy, every dogma of Christianity, every dictum of morality, is directly or indirectly comprehended within its scope. By a careful arrangement of detached passages a system of Pyrrhonism might be constructed almost rivalling the Hypotyposes of Sextus Empeirikus, and only differing from it in the fact that its ostensible basis is religious. For, as we have seen, it was in the teachings of Port Royal, in the writings of Jansen and St. Cyran, in the sermons of Singlier, that Pascal first discovered the truth of skepticism; it was only afterwards on his acquaintance with Montaigne that his Reason as a thinker was also enlisted in the same cause. His Pyrrhonism had thus a twofold parentage—the negative one of Jansenism, and the positive one of rationalism, or independent thought. It was the offspring in unequal degrees both of Faith and Reason, of philosophic pride and religious abasement, nourished and matured on the twofold diet of Montaigne's *Essais* and the Bible. There is, notwithstanding, a remarkable unity in Pascal's life, independently of that afforded by his devotion to truth, and which consists in the convergence in a common direction and for a common purpose of all the great influences by which it was affected. His first feeling of religion, his conversion to Jansenism, his ill-health, all combined to impress on him the natural weakness of man. This was the subject of Jansen's books, of Singlier's sermons, and of his sister Jacqueline's fervent exhortations. This on its ethical side was what he learnt from the Bible, and on its philosophical side from Montaigne's *Essais*. This, duly pondered, was the lesson both of his recluse life at home and his gay life in Paris. This was the language of those violent headaches, those fits of hypochondriacal melancholy which cost him so many hours of intense agony. We can thus understand the poignant bitterness with which he speaks of human misery. We can appreciate the fact that no expression of that weakness was ever stronger, fuller, more awful in its intensity than that which Pascal employs to define it. Indeed he even takes a morbid pleasure in intensifying and exaggerating the doctrine as an exercise in mental self-mortification. Like the hair shirt he put on, or the iron-pointed cinctures with which he girded himself, it became the disciplinary lash which he applied so unsparingly to subdue the reasoning pride of his intellect; and he delighted in developing its powers of punishment to its utmost extent, just as a religious devotee, or flagellant, in order to add to its efficacy, affixes new cords, or freshly pointed pieces of metal to his discipline.

Taking his stand on human imperfection, of which he regarded the Fall as the historical explanation, Pascal, like so many other divines, considered that the senses had thereby become irretrievably

disordered and ruined. He does not indeed tell us, as we may find Glanvil doing, what he considered to have been the power of antelapsarian senses, he takes the safer course of dwelling on their actual shortcomings, illusions and disorders. By their means, or by wrong teaching, all the knowledge which a man supposes himself to have, is uncertain if not false. Their worthlessness arises in part from the limited scope of their functions. They perceive nothing that is extreme. Too much sound deafens us, too great light blinds us, too great distance and too great proximity equally obstruct the view; too great prolixity and too great brevity in a discourse obscure it. Too much truth confounds us. First principles have too much evidence for us. . . . We perceive neither extreme heat nor excessive cold,¹ etc., etc. Even though within their range they may be true, the truth is small, narrow, limited and imperfect, so that we can never implicitly rely upon it. To be added to their inability is their positive evils, for by their allurements and fascinations they seduce and enslave a man. On the superior faculties they exercise their deceptive glamour, chaining both the Reason and the Will to the chariot wheels of their own turbulence and unruly passion, and sometimes being treated by the Reason and Imagination with the same indignity.² The illusion and imperfection which thus springs from the tainted sources of human knowledge spreads over the remaining faculties. Reason, *e.g.* is but another source of uncertainty. Montaigne's great value consists in having exposed so forcibly its blindness and perpetual mistakes. Pascal cheerfully joins his philosophical teacher in the abuse to which he subjects it. Reason offers itself as a guide to the senses, but there is no sense which is not able to deceive and betray it.³ Although arrogating judicial functions, it has no power to determine finally and absolutely any one single truth. For not only do the senses betray it, but the Imagination does the same thing only more irresistibly. In religion there is no truth of which Reason can convince us. It is not able to demonstrate the existence of God,⁴ or the immortality of the soul,⁵ nor any of the prime verities of the Christian creed. Probably human Reason has been corrupted by the Fall, else we should never see those extravagancies, perversions, inhuman appetities, manners and customs, we discern everywhere, for all the religions and sects in the world have natural reason for their guide. In like manner elementary principles of secular knowledge transcend the power of the Reason, as they are felt instinctively and cannot be proved by demonstration. The weakness of Reason is further exemplified by its extreme sensitiveness to

¹ *Pens.*, Havet, i. 5.² *Pens.*, i. 44.³ *Pens.*, i. 98.⁴ *Pens.*, i. 149, comp. ii. 158.⁵ *Pens.*, i. 155.

external influences. Of this Pascal employs Montaigne's illustration. The buzzing of a fly is enough to disturb it and render its ratiocination anomalous and perverted. The sudden sight of a cat or a rat, the crushing of a piece of charcoal, exasperates it. The tone of voice imposes on the wisest, and changes the aspect of a discourse or a poem. . . . A fine Reason that must be which a wind can alter!'¹ The mischief is that though the Reason be weak, fallible and corrupt, so that we cannot rely on its guidance, we are still by the cruel irony of our lot compelled to use it, just as we are to employ an ill servant or take service under a bad master when no other can be had. It is therefore as great a mistake to exclude it entirely as to trust it unreservedly. Though a false standard both for our sensations and ratiocinations, we have no other. Though it tyrannizes over us, we have no choice but to submit. In disobeying an imperious master a man is unfortunate, but in disobeying Reason he is a fool.²

Still more helpless do man's faculties seem when the conduct of the Imagination is taken into account. Pascal terms it that deceiving part of man. The mistress of error and falsehood. The enemy of Reason, which takes pleasure in controlling and ruling it, in order to prove its own paramount influence in everything. It has established in men a second nature. It has its own happy people, its own unfortunates, its healthy folk and its sick, its own rich and its own poor. The Imagination compels the Reason to believe or doubt or deny. It both suspends the senses and causes them to perceive, it has its fools and its sages. . . . It cannot make fools wise . . . but it renders them happy—which is more than Reason can do, for that only makes its friends miserable. . . . Pursuing this ironical train of thought, Pascal dilates on the effects of Imagination. Judges, with all persons in authority, have readily availed themselves of its power. Their scarlet robes, their ermine—in which they arm themselves like the furred law-cats of Rabelais³—the courts in which they judge—the lilies on their tapestries and carpets—all their stately grandeur is most necessary for their purpose. If doctors of medicine had not their cloaks and mules, and those of theology their square caps and enormous robes, they would never have duped mankind, which cannot resist such authentic proofs of wisdom and authority. If judges dispensed true justice, and doctors really possessed the art of healing, square caps would be superfluous. The dignity of those sciences would have been sufficient of itself. But possessing only imaginary sciences, they are obliged to resort to those vain trappings and ornaments which appeal to the imagination of those with whom they come in contact, and thus secure for them re-

¹ *Pens.*, i. 33.² *Pens.*, i. 70.³ Cf. *Pantagruel*, book v., chap. ii.

spect. We are not able, says Pascal, even to see a barrister in his official robes and head-dress without a favourable opinion of his talents.

The imagination thus disposes of everything; it creates beauty, justice and happiness. . . . Although the deceptive faculty seems to have been given for the express purpose of leading men into error—it is nevertheless the queen of the universe.

With fallible senses, a corrupt Reason, a deceitful Imagination, it is clear that we are ill-equipped for the pursuit of truth. Here we again meet the uncomplimentary sketch of man—his surroundings, endowments and pursuits, with which Montaigne had already made the world acquainted. Not that it is a mere copy. Montaigne is mainly a philosopher, Pascal is always at heart a theologian. To the former man is a curious but superior species of anthropoid ape. To the latter he is an anomalous hybrid—a cross between the ape and the angel. Montaigne is never weary of detailing the countless contradictions, follies and absurdities of humanity—Pascal relieves his sketch, otherwise quite as dark, with a little bright colour, for to him man's greatness—a relic of Eden—is as conspicuous as his littleness. It is in this contrariety, this juxtaposition of incompatible qualities, that his puzzle consists. Pope's antithetical estimate of man—

‘Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurl'd,
The glory, jest and riddle of the world,’

would have been thoroughly approved by Pascal; though it must be added that he takes care to particularize the weaknesses, contradictions and follies of men, while their greatness is often left in the obscurity of undeveloped epithets and general terms.

Man is therefore a nexus of controversies:—the greatest paradox in the universe. With reference to Infinity he is nothing: in relation to nothingness he is everything. Though the most miserable, he is the greatest object in Nature. If we ask why? ‘Because he is aware of his misery’ is the sarcastic reply. He has a capacity for knowing truth, yet is unable to discover it; indeed, with all his pretended regard for truth he cherishes a secret aversion for it. He is the abode of all kinds of wants, feelings, and desires, most of which are contradictory to and at war with the rest, but none of which is he able to satisfy. He is the centre of a hideous “comedy of errors,” a nucleus of mockeries, inconsistencies and cross purposes. Removed by an immense distance from the comprehension of extremes, both the end of things and their origin are for him hidden in impenetrable secrecy. So wretched are our destinies that a grain of sand in the ureter of a man decides the fate of kingdoms. Had the nose of Cleo-

patra been a little shorter the whole face of the world had been changed. Pascal thus professes a disciplinary grudge against humanity, he is determined to torture it to a sense of its wretched condition. 'If man boasts,' he says, 'I will humiliate him, if he is humble I will extol him. I will always contradict him, so that he may learn what an incomprehensible monster he is.'

In another remarkable passage¹ Pascal thus apostrophises his enemy. 'What a chimera therefore is man! What a novelty, what a monster, what a chaos, what a subject of contradiction, what a prodigy! Judge of all things, imbecile worm of earth; abode of truth, sink of uncertainty and error; the glory and the scum of the universe. Who can disentangle that intricacy. Nature confounds the Pyrrhonists, and Reason confounds the dogmatists. What is to become of you then, O man, you who investigate your true condition by your natural reason? You cannot avoid one of these sects, nor exist in either. Know then, proud man, what a paradox thou art to thyself. Abase thyself, helpless Reason. Be silent, O imbecile Nature; learn that man transcends man to a degree that is immeasurable,² and learn of your master, your real condition of which you are ignorant. Hear God!'

Had man never been corrupted, he would in his primal innocence have enjoyed with a feeling of certainty both truth and happiness, and if he had never been anything else but corrupt he would have had no idea either of truth or of happiness. But miserable beings that we are! and more so than if we never had been great; we have an idea of happiness and cannot reach it. We perceive within us an image of truth, and yet possess only falsehood. Incapable both of absolute ignorance and of certain knowledge, so much only is clear to us—that we were once in a state of perfection from which we have unluckily fallen.³ 'Like a dispossessed king, we are all the more miserable from having been once so great and so happy.'

Such being the condition of man, it is evident no reliance can be placed upon any conclusion or judgment emanating from him. Of what value, *e.g.*, can be his opinion? Indeed the vacillation and bewildering variety of human opinions represent only too accurately their corrupt source. Even among professed leaders of mankind, among philosophers themselves, we find no truth, and no guidance. Their elementary principles are as fatuous as the pretended *De omni scibile* of mediæval thinkers. They have confounded the idea of things, they have misled men on the subject of their happiness.

¹ *Pens.*, Havet, i. p. 114.

² 'Apprenez que l'homme passe infiniment l'homme.'—*Pens.*, i. p. 114.

³ *Pens.*, Havet, i. p. 115.

Their division into numberless sects is a clear proof of their uncertainty and their error. They are also quite ignorant of human nature. No philosopher *e.g.* taught that man was born in sin. Hence they have found no remedy for our evils. One hour's pain is a better teacher than all the philosophers put together. In a word, to mock at philosophy is the truest philosophical method.

Nor does Pascal derive his skepticism only from an induction of men and thought-systems outside of him, it is also a deduction from his own inner being. Introspection was his primary method—self-experience his final court of appeal; though as we shall soon find not a very reliable one. What commended Montaigne's *Essais* to him was their close and vivid representation of his own experiences.¹ Pascal sits like an austere judge in the secret tribunal of his innermost personality and religious feeling, and there deliberates with closed doors on the truth and value of everything, whether human or divine. Like all thinkers of diseased nervous sensibility, he sometimes exaggerates the worth and the wisdom of his introspective judgments. No doubt many of his profoundest meditations were originated and stimulated by intense bodily pain and the morbid reflection accompanying such pains in natures like his, so that he often 'made a pearl out of a tear'; yet his self-judgments occasionally appear harsh—the outcome of a passionate disdain of the evils and contradictions he discerns within him. The self (*moi*) he says merits hatred for two reasons: it is unjust in itself, in the fact that it makes itself the centre of all things; it is also disagreeable to others, because it wishes to subjugate them, for every self is the enemy and desires to be the tyrant of all others."² But we cannot too often remember in reading the *Thoughts*, that Pascal's self or *le Moi* is only a synonym of *l'homme*: when he castigates the latter he is indirectly administering the lash to the former. 'Let man,' he exclaims, 'know his own worth. Let him value himself, for he has in him a nature capable of good, but let him not prize on that account the littlenesses which pertain to it. Let him despise himself because that capacity is void, but let him not despise on that account a capacity which is natural. Let him hate himself—let him love himself; he has in him the faculty of knowing the truth and of happiness, but he has no truth that is either constant or satisfactory.' I blame equally, he says, those who only praise men, those who do nothing but blame him, and those who only bid him amuse himself; and I approve of those alone who seek while they groan (*cherchent en gemissant*).

¹ 'Ce n'est pas dans Montaigne, mais dans moi, que je trouve tout ce que j'y vois.'—*Pens.*, Havet, ii. 154.

² *Pens.*, Havet, i. p. 76.

Nothing, he says elsewhere, 'gives repose except the sincere search for truth.' 'We are quite incapable of not desiring the truth, we are only incapable of finding it.'¹

Pascal is thus clearly an advanced skeptic; but is he a Pyrrhonist? The growth of critical opinion on this point has been very gradual. Awakened by the discovery of the genuine text of the *Thoughts*, the idea of Pascal's extreme skepticism was at first received with a shout of indignation. The union of skepticism with devout pietism seemed too incongruous to be possible. It was next assented to with sighs of regret. Pascal became an addition to the large gallery of human monstrosities and intellectual perversities already in existence. It is now accepted as an indisputable fact by all impartial and trustworthy critics. It certainly has the highest conceivable attestation, for it is admitted by Pascal himself, and that in the only two ways in which a thinker can proclaim his philosophical creed. He both openly declares that 'Pyrrhonism is the Truth,' and says that 'before Christ Pyrrhon is the only sage,' and he tacitly applies Pyrrhonic doubt, with destructive effect, to all ordinary criterions and methods of human certainty. In this respect Pascal is a worthy disciple of Montaigne, whom he truly calls a pure Pyrrhonist; but the principle would probably never have attained the sway which it exercised over him, had it not been so completely in harmony with his religious feelings. In opposing the Reason or Intellect, and the pride which characterized that faculty, it was conferring a real service on religion. It was the hair shirt of penance and humility with which Pascal delighted to clothe his mind; and therefore the metaphysical counterpart of those austerities which he practised so zealously and foolishly on his frail and diseased body.

From this standpoint of Pyrrhonism, Pascal consistently denied the existence of all human and moral truth. He had indeed only two conceptions of truth. The one was a mathematical demonstration, the other an emotional conviction; the former was abstract and valueless, the latter personal and limited. All other alleged truths—practical truths relating to human life and conduct—metaphysical truths, whose proofs were supersensual and indirect, admitting only a greater or lesser degree of probability—truths of Nature and of Reason—truths of human laws and social conventions—in a word, the enormous majority of what men regard as unquestionable verities, Pascal absolutely denied. They neither appealed to the mathematical instinct, which demanded complete demonstration, nor could they induce the mystical conviction which was the offspring of devout

¹ *Pens.*, Havet, pp. 11, 12.

and overmastering feeling; and on the other hand their moderation, their compromising attitude and tendencies—the *via media* of probability which they pursued—their disclaimer of absolute veracity, were thoroughly distasteful to Pascal's nature and sympathies, which dwelt in and recognised only extremes: as he himself said: Total obscurity he could understand, partial obscurity displeased him¹ (and no doubt he would have said the same of brilliant and of partial light). We have already noted his harsh treatment of Reason. He is even more severe on Nature. Natural religion or proofs of religious verities from the dictates of Reason or the light of Nature were most repugnant to his feelings. It was this feature that especially displeased him in the dogmatic system of Descartes. This was also a point on which he dissented vehemently from his Port Royal coadjutors Arnauld and Nicole, who as Cartesians accepted Nature as a witness to the truth of Revelation. In his fanatical zeal against Natural Religion he even seems to lose something of his usual veracity; for he declares it a wonderful thing that a canonical author has never employed Nature in order to prove God.² As to the insufficiency of Nature to satisfy his own spiritual wants his testimony is emphatic. 'This is what I see, and what troubles me. I look around on all sides, and everywhere I see only obscurity. Nature does not offer me anything which is not a matter of doubt and restlessness. If I saw nothing that implied a Divine Being, I should make up my mind not to believe in Him; if I discerned everywhere traces of a Creator I would repose quietly in that faith; but seeing too much for denial, and too little for certainty, I am in a state to be pitied, and one as to which I have a hundred times wished that if a God established it He would have marked it in some unmistakeable manner, and that if those indications it gives of Him are deceptive He would have suppressed them altogether. I wish Nature had said everything or nothing, so that I might see what side I should take. Whereas in my present state, ignorant of what I am and what I ought to do, I know neither my condition nor my duty.'³ Nor does

¹ *Pens.*, Havet, ii. p. 116. Elsewhere he admits that in popular judgment 'Rien que la médiocrité n'est bon.—*Pens.*, i. p. 73.

² *Pens.*, Havet, i. 155. 'C'est une chose admirable que jamais auteur canonique ne s'est servi de la Nature pour prouver Dieu.' M. Havet well asks, 'Comment Pascal a-t-il pu écrire ces paroles?'—*Pens.*, Havet, pp. 155–167.

³ *Pens.*, Havet, i. 197. Havet quotes from the Heraclius of Corneille (Act IV. sc. iv.).

'Que veux-tu donc, Nature, et que prétends-tu faire?
De quoi parle à mon cœur ton murmure imparfait?
Ne me dis rien du tout, ou parle tout-à-fait.'

Voltaire in his Commentary supposes that Pascal imitated Corneille—a

the social compact, the combination of men in political or other communities supply a more certain or satisfactory rule of life than does Nature. Man being naturally lying, deceitful, untrustworthy, the bond of union in every state must be founded on mutual deception. The object of the political ruler should be peace, not justice. Pascal has, I regret to say, no higher conception of political liberty than is implied in the well-known words:—

‘That those should take who have the power, and they should keep who can.’

As for laws, right, justice, there are no universal rules. They vary with geographical boundaries, climatic and other accidental conditions. Had the economy of the universe recognised universal justice, it would never have established that maxim—the most general of all among men—that every man should follow the customs of his country. The splendour of the true justice would have subjugated all nations, and legislators would not have taken for a model, in place of that eternal justice, the imaginations and caprices of Persians and Germans. One would see it established by all the political states in the world, and in every period of time—whereas one hardly sees any justice or injustice which does not change its quality by changing its climate. Three degrees more elevation of the pole are enough to reverse all jurisprudence. A meridian decides what is true—in a few years of possession, fundamental laws change. Justice has its epochs. The coming in of Saturn or the Lion tells us the origin of such a crime. A fine justice that which a river bounds. Truth on this side the Pyrenees, error on that.¹ Theft, incest, the murder of children and fathers, each has had its place among virtuous actions. ‘Can anything be more ridiculous than that a man should have the right to kill me because he lives on the other side of the water, and that his prince has a quarrel against mine, though I have no quarrel with him. . . . There are without doubt natural laws, but that fine Reason which is itself corrupt, has corrupted everything.’

But if Reason, it may be asked, is so utterly corrupt and helpless that it can tell us nothing about God or moral duty, is there no other method of supplying its deficiency, without having recourse to the Jansenist notion of superhuman compulsory grace. Is there no argument by which we can persuade men of the world of the fact of God’s existence, and the superiority of a virtuous over a vicious life.

perfectly gratuitous hypothesis. The idea lay at the very root of Pascal’s religious consciousness.

¹ *Pens.*, Havet, i. 37, 38. Comp. p. 70.

'Yes,' answers Pascal, who thereupon adduces one of the strangest pieces of reasoning that even apologetic Christianity can claim. This is the doctrine of even chances—a calculus of probabilities founded not on truth but on human interest—the method of gamblers when they play pitch and toss. 'According to the Reason, belief or non-belief in God—the pro and con, are both quite indifferent. There is absolutely nothing to determine the question either way.' Must we then remain neutral, shall we decline to bet on one side and on the other? 'No,' replies Pascal, 'that we cannot do. The question must be decided; we dare not remain neutral; our interests are at stake and those interests are infinite. What then must we do? How must we bet? We must lay our wager on the side of God, of virtue and of heaven: if we win, we win everything; if we lose, we lose nothing. Such in brief is the noted 'betting argument' on which Pascal lays so much stress, regarding it apparently as demonstrative. We cannot suppose that he intended any contempt for the momentous issues he thus discusses in the genuine spirit of a gambler; it is equally impossible to conceal either the skepticism which prompted the argument or the cynicism with which it is elaborated. Quite befitting the Pascal of the gay world of Paris, the associate of noted gamblers such as the Chevalier de Meré and M. Miton, the mathematical Œdipus of gambling problems—it seems strangely out of place in the recluse of Port Royal. Nor is the conclusion of the argument satisfactory. For suppose the gambler for the stake of eternity should ask, How much shall I bet, for I may wager more than is needful? Pascal's answer is, that is impossible, for at most you can only stake a finite against an infinite. The difference is incommensurable between your wager and the prize you stand a chance of winning. That, says Pascal, is demonstrative, and if men can receive any truth, they can this.

But this demonstration is in reality so far from being satisfactory, that the neophyte in this novel art of betting cannot help saying, Yes, I admit it. But still is there no way of seeing the hidden part of the game? And to satisfy that rebellious curiosity Pascal sends him to the Bible, and the Christian religion. Supposing the insight thus afforded is either insufficient or inapplicable, and the young enquirer should still plead, 'I am so constituted as to be unable to believe, what do you tell me to do?' Pascal's final advice is: Do? Why follow my example, and the examples of others similarly situated—men who once were in your dilemma, but who have now staked their whole wealth on the hazard. I am recommending to you. Follow their example of *doing everything as if you believed*, using holy water, causing masses to be said, etc. This will naturally produce both

your belief and your stupid docility (*vous abêtira*). But that, retorts the questioner, is what I fear. And why? asks Pascal, what have you to lose? What ill can befall you in choosing such a lot? You will be (the requisite *bêtise* notwithstanding) faithful, honest, humble, grateful, kind, sincere, a genuine friend. True, you will not enjoy those baleful pleasures, ambition, worldly delights, etc., but will you not have others instead? . . . I tell you that you will at last discover that you have wagered for something certain and infinite, for which you have given nothing.¹

Such is Pascal's argument on the even chances of such verities as God's existence, the future state, and the superiority of virtue. Whatever conviction it carried to those for whom perhaps it was specially designed; for the majority of thinking men it is not only intrinsically weak, but saturated with a cynical and almost revolting contempt for human rights and powers. Cousin thus sums up its purport.² 'We must renounce Réason, we must in accordance with a precept of Pascal, which this argument makes quite clear, turn ourselves into machines,³ we must retire into ourselves, not mentally, but mechanically, in order to arrive gradually and by slow and insensible degrees to a belief in God.' That is true, nay more, that alone is true if we start from Pyrrhonism to seek for God. Here we have the whole of Faith, I mean all the natural Faith which is allowed to Pascal by his miserable philosophy. Pascal's master, the Pyrrhonist Montaigne, had said before him, 'To become philosophers we must brutalize ourselves.'⁴ This, no doubt, is the advice of the foregoing argument; at the same time it should be remembered that there are other places in the *Thoughts* in which Pascal places man midway between the angel and the brute.⁵ Cousin holds that Pascal's reasoning here is wholly Pyrrhonian. I cannot concede that, though it is obvious that it is based on pure indifferentism. What seems to me most offensive in the argument is its cynical recommendation to self-stultification in order to be virtuous and orthodox. Although a semi-Pyrrhonist myself, and believing that 'whoso increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow,' I should interpret this maxim not of a voluntary limitation of human powers and aspirations, as much as of the limitless range of speculation which makes every forward advance an additional proof of our imperfect attainment.

¹ *Pens.*, Havet, i. p. 150. Cf. ii. 95, 124.

² *Études*, p. 63.

³ *Pens.*, Havet, i. 155, 156. Pascal agreed with Descartes that inferior animals were mere automata.

⁴ 'Pour nous assagir il nous faut abêter.' Cf. St. Paul, 1 Cor. iii. 18.

⁵ *Pens.*, Havet, i. p. 11. Cf. p. 100.

These illustrations of Pascal's vigorous and almost unlimited skepticism may suffice for our purpose. They might easily be extended, for the whole work is redolent of incredulity. To use Cousin's language:¹ 'It gleams forth from every page, and from every line. Pascal breathes skepticism; he is full of it. He announces it as a principle, he accepts all its consequences, and he pushes it to its extreme limit, which is the avowed contempt and almost the fanatical hatred of all philosophy.'

Pascal, too, has adopted Pyrrhonism with his eyes open; he is much too clear-sighted not to discern its imperfections as a mode of thought. He sees clearly that Montaigne, *e.g.*, reasons in a circle. He admits that a perfectly effective Pyrrhonism is impossible—that Nature confounds the Pyrrhonists. Still he is not deterred, any more than was Montaigne, by these contradictions. A philosophy which should be perfectly free from all weaknesses, incongruities and imperfections he would probably have regarded as an anomaly in an universe like ours, and for beings constituted as we are. What especially recommended Pyrrhonism to him was not its own intrinsic merits, as much as the supercilious, self-satisfied opinions and beliefs of dogmatists. 'That which astonishes me more than anything,' he exclaims, 'is to see that all the world is not astonished at its weakness.' He sarcastically remarks that the fact of the majority being dogmatists is all the better for Pyrrhonism; which derives from its enemies its *raison d'être* and its nourishment. If all were Pyrrhonists they would be in fault. I have therefore no difficulty in supposing that Pascal was fully aware of the dichotomy and inconsistency in his mental formation. He knew as well as M. Havet that the tendency of extreme skepticism is to leave its adherents defenceless against the tyranny of authority. There seemed no inconsistency to him in affirming the impotence of the Reason to decide whether there is a God, and allowing the same Reason to pronounce the Pope deceived on the subject of Grace.² He was aware that an unconditional skepticism which destroyed every human test and method of certainty was not *prima facie* in entire harmony with a conviction for which he could only plead his own inner consciousness. Whatever we might be, Pascal himself was not disturbed by a dualism, which appeared to him founded in the very constitution of the world, and which was demanded by the needs of his own being. The uncertainty of all human knowledge only established the certitude of Divine knowledge. In the recesses of his own heart, in the clear intuition of his religious faculties, in the immediate instincts of profound and culti-

¹ Cousin, *Études*, p. 42.

² Cf. Havet, *Pens.*, i. xv.

vated feelings, he possessed a test of certainty—a court of final appeal, which could generally hold its own against the suggestions of Pyrrhonism. ‘We possess,’ he says, ‘an idea of truth invincible to all Pyrrhonism.’ Hence, looking to the obverse of our medal, we find that Pascal was a dogmatist as well as a skeptic. What Reason cannot give he will wrest by Faith. What intellectual processes fail to yield, he will gain by the categorical imperative of religious intuition. Pascal was therefore a mystical Pyrrhonist, and both in the extreme degree of his Pyrrhonism and the excessive fervour of his mysticism, unique among skeptics. Hirshaym is the skeptical thinker who approaches him most nearly; but his intuition is based formally on the dogmas of the Church, whereas Pascal’s is the combined product of his spiritual feelings and the study of the Bible. However harshly, therefore, we judge Pascal’s skepticism, we cannot deny its religious and Christian basis. If he was in error, ‘the light that led astray was light from heaven.’ If his creed was inconsistent, at least it administered to his spiritual and devotional cravings. In the words of Tasso—

‘E dall’ inganno suo vita riceve.’

Outwardly, as you know, he never broke with the Romish Church. In reality, however, Pascal, like most men of independent and powerful intellect, had, from his numberless dissonances and perplexities, beaten out his own theological music and formulated his own creed. It was neither the creed of the Church, nor the syntagma of *Port Royal* as represented by Arnauld and Nicole. Distinguished from the former by the fewness and simplicity of its main tenets, and by its Protestant stress on Faith; it was distinct from the latter by its skepticism, and its exclusive reliance on feeling as the basis of all knowledge.¹ No doubt there is a tacit acknowledgment, both in the *Provincials* and in the *Thoughts*, of the creed of the Church *en bloc*; but there is a marked absence of all allusion to its speculative dogmas. In the later years of his life he had come to regard Christ, His life and teachings, as the centre-point of all knowledge whether human or divine. From the judgments and dogmas of popes and councils he formally appealed ‘to the tribunal of Jesus Christ.’ He observes that two laws are sufficient to regulate the whole Christian republic, alluding no doubt to the first and second commandment of the Gospels. His stress on the practical duties of Christianity is shown both by his life, and by the remarkable ‘Profession of Faith’ which was found among his papers after

¹ Ste Beuve observes, ‘Le caractère principal et profond de Pascal, en effet est surtout moral.’—*Port Royal*, iii. 103 (rather *theological*).

his death.¹ He despises reasonable proofs of such dogmas as the Trinity and the immortality of the soul, because the knowledge of these things without Jesus Christ is useless and sterile.'² He has thus attained a position in which Christ is no longer the founder of ecclesiastical dogma, but its real opponent, and the only deliverer from its thralldom. On the other hand, Pascal, in a remarkable passage of the seventeenth Provincial, expressly denies that he is a Port Royalist, and disclaims responsibility for Port Royalist doctrine.³ 'I am alone,' he exclaimed of his warfare with the Jesuits; and this intellectual and spiritual isolation he appears in the *Thoughts* to regard as the inalienable lot of every man. 'One must die alone; it is therefore necessary to act as if one lived alone.'⁴ Pascal's personal creed consisted in reality of two articles—the Fall and Grace. As he quaintly puts it, 'the whole Faith consists in Jesus Christ and Adam.'⁵ The fall was the most satisfactory account he could give

1

'PROFESSION OF FAITH.

'I love poverty because Jesus Christ loved it.

'I love wealth, for it enables me to help the poor.

'I keep fidelity with all the world.

'I do not render evil to those who have done me evil, but I wish them a state like mine, in which one remains unaffected by good or evil on the part of men.

'I try to be just, true, sincere and faithful to all men.

'I have a cordial tenderness for those whom God has joined closely to me, and whether alone, or in the sight of men, I do all my actions as before God who will judge them, and to whom I have consecrated them all.

'Such are my convictions, and I bless every day my Redeemer who has inspired me with them, and who, of a man full of weakness, misery, lust, pride and ambition, has made me exempt from all these infirmities, by the power of His grace, to which all the glory is due, not to myself, who have only misery and error.'—*Faugère*, ii. p. 243. Havet, *Pens.*, ii. 129.

² Havet, *Pens.*, i. 155. So he says of the Incarnation, that 'the Church has as much trouble to show that Jesus Christ was man, as to show that he was God.'—*Pens.*, Havet, ii. p. 18.

³ *Prov. Lett.*, xvii. Cf. Ste Beuve (*P. R.*, iii. 75), who seems to think that Pascal was herein guilty of disingenuousness, and availed himself of the subterfuge that he was not then a resident in Port Royal. But the words will better bear the meaning assigned them in the text. No student of Pascal need be reminded of the many occasions in which he acted as well as thought entirely alone, and in opposition to Arnauld and Nicole, and all his dearest friends.

⁴ *Pens.*, Havet, i. 197. Cf. Havet's criticism, p. 202, which, however, is superficial. Pascal's thought is not the misanthropical sentiment of La Trappe, nor does it necessarily exclude intercourse with our fellow man. It is the simple assertion of a truth which every thinker must have experienced, and the more deeply as his thought is original and profound. 'On mourra seul' is a text of which there have been numberless eloquent comments and expansions, but none more eloquent than that of F. Robertson's Sermons, *passim*.

⁵ *Pens.*, Havet, ii. 88.

of the numberless contradictions, weaknesses, and fallacies in man, which rendered skepticism necessary; while grace or redemption was that personal conviction of his own relation to God through Christ, which was his antidote for, or at least palliative of, that skepticism. Thus his scheme of theology was, as in Augustine's case, in one sense the outcome, in another the cause and justification of his skepticism. At the same time it must, I think, be admitted that Pascal lays more stress on man's fall than on his recovery. The first was universal, the second partial and limited; the one was self-evident, the other hidden and recondite. The former was the exoteric experience of the race, the latter the esoteric 'enlightenment' of a few privileged individuals. Pascal has himself the positive certainty of devout immediate intuition, but he nowhere asserts the same privilege for all the redeemed or the elect, still less for the whole human race.

Why Pascal states thus strongly (some would say exaggerates) the infirmities of human nature, both mental and physical, is not difficult to explain. Besides the ascetic direction imparted to his religious feelings by the teaching of Jansen, we must bear in mind that for the greater part of his life he was a sufferer from some severe nervous and cerebral affection, which finally during the last four years—the period when the *Thoughts* were composed—made his life one long continued torment. This is not equivalent to pronouncing, as certain biographers of Pascal have supposed, that he was a madman or a fool. The fact itself of his cerebral disease is clearly attested, both by the symptoms detailed by the graphic pens of his sister and his niece, and by the report of his autopsy;¹ nor is there any inconsistency between such a fact, and Pascal's inditing the *Provincial Letters* and solving the problem of the Cycloid after the serious commencement of his insidious malady, which, according to his niece, probably began in 1648. The shades and varieties of mental disease are well-nigh endless; and so far from its being universally true that every cerebral disorder involves a diminution of intellectual power, I have met with cases in which it was actually increased and intensified by such an affection, just as muscular power is abnormally increased by certain nervous complaints. Pascal's was clearly a case of the same kind, in which the brain appears to have been stimulated and excited for the time by a disintegration which was destined eventually to destroy all its noble powers. Many of his profoundest thoughts were conceived during the premonitory attacks, and in the intervals of those horrible headaches and fits of nervous prostration which were a too certain symptom of cerebral disease, and which his

¹ Cf. Lelut, *L'Amulette de Pascal*, p. 186; *Pens.*, Hav., i. cxii.

medical attendants, who richly deserved the lash which Molière applies to their *confrères* of the same age, were accustomed to treat by bleeding and other depletory measures.¹ We learn that Pascal found an actual sedative for his agonies in abstruse mathematical calculations and theological cogitations. In my own practice I have also known instances of a similar kind. I remember one case especially—that of an eminent mathematician, who found in working out abstruse questions, a solace for headaches, the severity of which would else have been, as he often told me, quite intolerable. It would seem as if the intellectual faculties were gathering all their powers to resist the slow and insidious progress of an enemy to which they were finally compelled to succumb. I have therefore no difficulty, from a professional point of view, in believing that Pascal was a hypochondriac, or that he was liable to such hallucinations as seeing an abyss on one side of his chair or his carriage, nor do I conceive that such facts impair or in the slightest degree detract from the intellectual value of his *Thoughts*. At the same time they serve to explain that intensity of his religious asceticism, and the negative, pessimistic character of his intellectual proclivities, in which he resembles oriental thinkers. Nor need we be surprised at this; for a powerful intellect, helplessly struggling in the iron grip of physical disease, will naturally evolve from its condition conclusions not quite in harmony with an optimistic view of the universe and its govern-

¹ Cf. Lelut, *L'Amulette*, p. 182, etc. Readers of Molière will hardly need to be reminded of the exquisite burlesque of the Science of Medicine, contained in the third interlude of *La Malade Imaginaire*, in which the whole science is compendiously defined:—

‘Clysterum donare
Postea seignare
Ensuita purgare.’

—*Eur. Comp.*, ed. Moland, vii. p. 298, etc.

² M. Ste Beuve aptly quotes apropos of Pascal's mathematical opiate the aphorism of Hippokrates (*P. R.*, iii. p. 314): ‘Duobus laboribus simul obortis, non in eodem loco, vehementior obscurat alterum.’ In this respect mathematics might perhaps be a sphere of mental activity which less than any other is susceptible of disturbance by incipient cerebral disease. The mechanical, almost automatic nature of most of its processes, the concentration of the mind on a few lines of thought instead of its distribution over a wide field, the abstruse character of its questions, the compact nature of its reasoning, while tending to coalesce and direct the scattered brain currents into a single channel, would thereby operate as a sedative, and would make the solution even of difficult problems not an insuperable task. Pascal's own contempt for pure mathematical processes is strikingly shown in his letter to Fremat, quoted by Ste Beuve, *P. R.*, iii. p. 318, in which he says that he sees little difference between a man who is only a mathematician, and a skilful artizan.—Cf. *loc. cit.*, p. 319, with Ste Beuve's note.

ment. The grim irony of his fate will present itself so forcibly to his consciousness. The incongruous relation between powers and capacities so great, and infirmities comparatively so insignificant—Pegasus harnessed to a dung-cart—wings of Icarus joined on with a little wax—will appeal so closely to his experience, that his view of the world and of himself will inevitably be marked by some singularity. Sometimes, as in the case of Heine, the feeling of utter physical weakness will be accompanied by placid acquiescence flavoured with a little good-humoured cynicism. Sometimes, as in the example of Leopardi, its expression will be poignant misery and despair, and a morbid longing after death; or, as in the case of Schopenhauer, the same Buddhist conception of the universe may be the effect of a soured disappointed temper. Pascal is an example of similar pessimist and half-Buddhist tendencies,¹ only governed in the last resort by strong indomitable trust in God. He paints the misery of man in colours whose extreme blackness is derived from his own bitter experience. Life, he considers, like a Hindoo mystic, as a deceptive illusion, and sees no distinction in kind between dreams and living scenes. He also decries knowledge and reasoning, and tends to a Nirvana of devout and rapt contemplation of the Divine Being. He despises existence, and habitually concentrates his mind on death. For the same reason he manifests a special regard for those doctrines, aspects, and usages of Christianity which have in them most scope for humility, asceticism and self-mortification.

Pascal died on the 19th of August, 1662, at the early age of thirty-nine years. His death was in harmony with the extreme devotion which marked the latter years of his life. He died, as Ste Beuve says, in a ravishment of joy. For two months previously his disease had greatly increased. His paroxysms, which were of daily occurrence, were intensely painful, and each left behind it an increasing languor and prostration hardly distinguishable from death itself. Notwithstanding the daily advance of his insidious and terrible disorder, and his increasing weakness, he quitted his own house at the end of June, and took up his abode in the house of his sister, Madame Perier. His reason for the change is characteristic and touching. He had received into his own house a poor homeless family, a man

¹ These Buddhist tendencies and practices were no doubt common to most of the inmates of Port Royal. See details given by Ste Beuve, *P. R.*, iii. 321, 322. Pascal carried these austerities to an excess which that author rightly stigmatises as 'revolting.' *P. R.*, iii. 320, where see the descriptions of his iron girdle studded with sharp points. His saying that 'disease is the natural state of all Christians,' is a sufficient illustration of his perverted views both of Christianity and of man.

with his wife and children. One of the sons had caught the small-pox, and Pascal was afraid lest his sister, who came every day to see him, might carry the infection to her own children; and, instead of removing the poor sick child, he found it more simple, says Ste Beuve, ill as he himself was, to cause himself to be moved to his sister's home, thus manifesting a passionate ardour of charity quite in harmony with the intensity of his other Christian graces.

It is time to sum up our subject. My conception of Pascal's character you will have anticipated from incidental remarks in my essay. It was a character at once strange and noble, wayward and consistent, eccentric and sublime—an union of rare and almost impossible contrasts. His intellectual faculties, notwithstanding the forcing process to which they had been subjected in early life, attained a maturity of power and excellence which placed him among the foremost thinkers of his time. His religious feelings were so true, so acute and profound, that their embodiment in the *Thoughts* has ever since been accepted as the fullest expression of the deep cravings and emotions of thinking Christians which the literature of Christendom supplies. But with these greatnesses there are combined, in his composite personality, littlenesses and perversities which are absurd, fantastic and almost incredible. 'He had in him,' says Cousin,¹ 'something of the child, of the *bel esprit*, of the hero, and of the fanatic. He neither took nor did anything by halves.' This is the key both to the greatness of his merits and to his conspicuous and undoubted defects. Each of the dominating forces in his character established in its turn an imperious despotism which bore no rival near the throne. Hence his religious belief was so fervid that there was no room for doubt, and occasionally so fanatical that there was no margin for tolerance. His philosophical skepticism was so keen and comprehensive that there was no place for conviction. His worldliness was for a time so absorbing that it left little inclination for religion; and again his religious practices and austerities were so excessive that they added a new source of feebleness to his already weakened constitution. One hardly knows whether to be angry with, or only to sigh over, the horrible cruelties which he inflicted on his wretched body, and which co-operated with his disease in hurrying him—like a religious *felo de se*—to an early grave. For myself, I confess I find comfort in the reflection that such painful distortions of religious duty were not in reality the aberrations of a great intellect, but the extreme ungoverned impulses of a diseased brain. I regard with positive satisfaction the evidence of his autopsy, and especially those 'two indentations in his brain, as it were of a finger in wax, which

¹ *Études*, p. 80.

were found filled with clotted and corrupt blood, and had already commenced to gangrene the *dura mater*.' In no other way but by distinct lesion of the organ of thought would it be easy, in my judgment, to account for a combination of demerits so closely approaching great excellencies, and virtues so nearly akin to vices. What else can be said of a chastity which would fain prevent a mother from receiving the caresses of her own children, and which pretended to repel the tender cares of his own sister in order to induce a repugnance which might quench her love for him. There was thus a want of evenness, of harmony and homogeneousness in his mental and emotional nature. He was a striking illustration of the saying that 'men of great parts have no moderation.' In ordinary human characters there is a principle of 'give and take,' of mutual adjustment and adaptation among different faculties and passions, not unlike the way in which the strings and pipes of pianos and organs are, by sharpening and flattening, attuned to each other. There is nothing of this mental 'temperature' in Pascal, and therefore we experience a sense of dissonance in analysing his incongruities, like listening to the discordant harmonies of a powerful but ill-tuned and ill-played organ.

Pascal's skepticism had, as we have seen, a well-defined progress of birth, maturity and decay, each separate stage being marked, if not originated, by some convulsive throe or great mental change. Commencing in Jansenism it found its aliment in Montaigne's *Essais*, and attained its climax as a practical principle or *modus vivendi* in the years of his gay life in Paris, and as a religious principle or *modus credendi* in the *Thoughts*. Its partial decay may be said to have been coeval with the weakening of his mental faculties during the last few months of his life, when it became nearly absorbed, if not quite extinguished, by religious mysticism. But in its origin and development Pascal's skepticism is not only rare—it is absolutely unique. The alliance of Pyrrhonism with Christianity, generally in the relation of servant and mistress, is not uncommon among Christian skeptics; we have already met with it in several instances, and we may not impossibly meet with it again, especially in the cases of Huet and Hirnhaym. But in Pascal the relation is closer. Here skepticism is the logical development of one doctrine of Pauline Christianity—the fall of man. Joseph Glanvil saw that this doctrine might be pressed into the service of skepticism, but he did not evolve his conclusions with the pitiless logic which Pascal had acquired from his mathematical studies. Glanvil's mental constitution was of a more normal and withal robust and healthy kind. To Pascal the Fall was the ruin of humanity, and of every knowledge and certainty which without it

man might have achieved. The Senses, the Reason, the Imagination, the Will, all were irretrievably disordered by its means; and if Redemption gave back the lost certainty, it was by calling into being a new and miraculous faculty created by and belonging exclusively to itself.

It would be impossible to say that Pascal openly embraced the doctrine of Dual Truth as we have seen it put forward by other skeptics, *i.e.* as a final settlement of the problems of the universe; yet the actual result was not very different from what it would have been had he formulated his reasoning on such a basis. The difference between Pascal and Pomponazzi was, that what to the former were mere principles was to the latter the ultimate conclusion derivable from them. Dualism as a fact, a phenomenon inherent in the universe and in man, Pascal could not help acknowledging. It forms the basis of his theology with its two articles of the Fall and Redemption. He sees its traces everywhere. Man is the opposite pole to God. Divine justice is contrasted with its miserable human imitation. Nature is opposed to grace, liberty to free-will, reason to feeling, truth to error, heaven to hell; the dichotomy in his own being, the struggle between body and mind, between health and disease, between inclination and duty, was thus only the reflex of antagonisms without, in Nature, in humanity, in religion, everywhere. Not that he derived any consolation from this fact. It did not suggest to him a similarity of condition which rendered man, with all his contradictions, a homogeneous portion of the universe. He would, perhaps, have said that the conviction of his own imperfection served to intensify rather than diminish the inconsistencies he saw elsewhere. Pascal could not regard these contradictions with the philosophical acquiescence of a Pomponazzi, or the cynicism of a Montaigne. Partly his religion and sense of truth, partly nervous irritability forbade. So far as he could he set himself to destroy these incongruities, to merge one of the contradictions in its opposite. He arraigned these antinomies against each other as fell adversaries, one of which must needs exterminate the other. He could not consider them, as other skeptics did, different sexes inherently unlike but capable of being joined together in peaceful wedlock. To rest satisfied, *e.g.* with the persuasion that the truth of philosophy was intended to be the falsehood of religion or *vice versa*, that Nature was meant to be in eternal hostility to grace, that man should be for ever opposed to God, was destructive of all truth, and implied precisely that holding extremes in equilibrium, that acquiescence in the mean which was so utterly abhorrent to Pascal's whole nature. No! the adversaries must contend to the bitter end. No truce must be made, still less a lasting

peace. One of the foes must vanquish and irretrievably destroy the other. Either God or man, superstition or atheism, must be victorious; either Nature or Grace, good or evil must triumph. We must believe everything, or nothing.

But it is on one of these antagonisms, that in which all other contrarieties converge, that which is for ever contending in the recesses of his own being, that Pascal concentrates his attention. Nowhere else is the dichotomy more marked; in no instance is the need of destroying it more urgent and imperative. I mean the struggle between Faith and Reason.

In none of our skeptics have we this contest—common more or less to all—carried to such dire extremities. Generally, the belligerents finally concur in some treaty whereby one is compelled to yield to the other, or some other amicable adjustment of rival claims and territories is arrived at; or else the war is languidly prosecuted as if it mattered little on which side victory was destined to declare itself. But with Pascal the struggle is fierce, terrible, and protracted. The combatants are not very unequal in strength and skill, nor in unyielding tenacity, and the struggle must be prosecuted until one has exterminated the other. In one of the most striking of the *Thoughts* Pascal proclaimed the conditions of the combat, as well as the absolute necessity of every mortal engaging in it. In the open war between Pyrrhonism and Christianity, every man, he said, was compelled to choose. Neutrality was impossible, for it was equivalent to embracing vehemently one of the sides in the quarrel. In Pascal's case the final issue is not doubtful. His is a striking example of the 'victory of faith.' Not that it overcomes skepticism by ratiocination or philosophical argument. It seems to rise superior to it, to attain a state of rapt ecstatic conviction in which doubt is ignored or becomes for the time inoperative,—perhaps its materials are even adroitly converted into the very food and nourishment of faith.

Thus there are men of the type of Augustine, Pascal, and Hirnhaym to whom religious conviction, in its developed form and full vigour, is not a matter of reasoning, nor even a powerful but evanescent emotion; it is rather an intense, fierce, consuming passion dominating over the whole man. To such fervid minds, glowing in a white heat of religious enthusiasm, the cold methods and conclusions of philosophy are either consumed to a dry ash and so annihilated, or else are assimilated with its own vehement sentiment. Hence Pascal's extreme skepticism became ultimately incorporated with, as it had been primarily engendered by, his profound religious ardour. It was but so much fuel added to the fierce glow of ecstatic pietism. His Pyrrhonism ends in the 'mystery of Jesus,' and his uncertainty

terminates in devout assurance. Before his consuming Faith, Reason, Humanity, Science, Doubt, the world, self, all disappeared. Nothing was left in his dying consciousness but God.

Some years ago, when in Germany, I heard a Mass of Mozart's, the Credo of which seemed to me then, and as I recall it, appears to me even more vividly now, a faithful musical representation of the inner life of such a thinker as Pascal. I remember it began with a repetition of loud chords (like Pascal's first conversion) on the word 'Credo,' and proceeded with a variety of phrasing and a gradation of musical lights and shades through the Apostles' Creed. It seemed to me as if the inspired composer had intended to mark by his music, not as ordinarily, the effect of the words on the feelings of an unquestioning believer, but the method and measure of credence which a doubter like Pascal would attach to them; in other words, the vehement insistence of faith, in opposition to the subdued hesitancy of the intellect. Sometimes the article enunciated was given forth with full melodious utterance, as if the expression of undoubted conviction; at other times it was rendered with a timid hesitation, and in soft tones or a minor key, as if the speaker (for it appeared to me the confession of a single individual) was not quite so certain, whether of the truth or importance of the avowed belief. This might of course have been merely my state of feeling at the time. But what especially struck me was this: ever and anon there was a recurrence of the leading chords 'Credo,' 'Credo,' as if to denote either the recovery of the soul from a transitory lapse into doubt, or else the determined conviction of religious faith asserting itself vigorously and even fiercely against the skeptical whispers of the Reason. So the Creed went on with its joyous outbursts of fervid belief, and its pathetic confessions of wavering faith, alternating like the cloud and sunshine of an April day, until the close; when it terminated, like Pascal's fitful and doubtful, but still faithful and truth-loving career, with a forte and fortissimo 'Credo!' 'Credo!' at once impatient and defiant of doubt, and jubilant with the full inexpressible earnestness of intensely passionate conviction.

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ARUNDEL. Thanks, Doctor. Your paper has, at least for me, thrown considerable light on Pascal. I can now better understand his skepticism, though it is by the analogy which infers any marvellous attribute from a character composed of marvels. Being the extreme man that he was, it is only natural that his skepticism should take an extreme form. Indeed I

should doubt whether in history or in literature there is another such example of the union of so many excesses, bad and good, in a single personality. His dogmatism, so far as it went, was just as extravagant as his skepticism, and his self-maceration at Port Royal as excessive as the carriage and six of his gay life in Paris. He was clearly incapable of moderation, sobriety of judgment or self-restraint. . . . I have been wondering how far that tendency to excess may have been the inability to discern the nature of moral or historical proof which so often besets the mathematical intellect; but in Pascal's case there was more than that—there was an emotional sensitiveness which was just as impatient of restraint as his reason was of any conclusion short of absolute demonstration. In a word he was—both in his excellencies and defects—a born fanatic.

TREVOR. I should prefer your putting it in another way, Arundel. Look at it as devotion to truth, and to the only idea man can form of truth, and you will not judge Pascal quite so harshly. He regarded truth as one, simple, absolute and demonstrable, admitting no deficiency, imperfection or compromise. A half truth in religion or morals he could no more understand than a proximate or semi-solution of a problem in Euclid. His motto might have been, as Ste Beuve paraphrases it, 'Believe all or nothing.'¹ Accept for truth or denounce as falsehood. His quarrel with the Jesuits turns mainly upon this point of different degrees of truth or goodness. His utter detestation of a doctrine held by so many skeptics, notably by Montaigne himself, proves the distinction, not merely in degree but in kind, between his unbelief and the common type of Pyrrhonic skepticism. . . . It seems to me that however much we blame his religious and emotional excesses, his intellectual instincts were correct; and therefore his skepticism, so far as founded on them, justifiable.

HARRINGTON. For my part, I agree with Arundel; with all its noble qualities Pascal's was an ill-balanced intellect, as in-

¹ *Causeries du Lundi*, ii. p. 180. 'Il (Huet) ne rattachait pas le scepticisme à la religion avec l'impétuosité de Pascal; il ne disait pas à l'homme avec tourment "*Tout croire, ou ne rien croire.*" Il n'y a pas de milieu, mortel, il faut choisir!'

deed your paper, Doctor, also admitted. Truth in most matters of human speculation, like Virtue in Aristotle's *Ethics*, consists in a mean. Neither does the human universe suggest, nor are human powers capable of adopting, extremes. It is mere idle folly complaining of this, as Pascal does in the passages you quoted about 'too much light blinding us,' or his preference of total to partial obscurity. I am unable to conceive physical organs which would be omnipotent—even a combination *e.g.* of the visual powers of the eagle and the owl would be an optical impossibility. The only universe which would have satisfied Pascal's diseased cravings would have been a world of human Omnisciences and Almightyies, the bare designation of which involves countless absurdities. Nor can I reconcile his childish complaints of the limitation of human faculties (which really remind me of children in nursery stories crying for the moon) with his well known piety and acquiescence in the will of God. Those faculties are surely best which are most adapted to fulfil the functions for which they were intended, and suited to the environment in which they are placed. We can by an effort of imagination conceive an ideal truth, but experience teaches us to be satisfied with actual, *i.e.* partial truth. I never yet knew a civil or criminal case in which truth was so absolutely on one side that an ingenious advocate could not raise a quibble to oppose it. The main moral of Pascal's life seems to me the futility, to use no harsher term, of desiring extreme excellencies, whether intellectual or of any other kind, and the inculcation, by so striking an example, of the old lesson of golden mediocrity.

MISS LEYCESTER. Your theory, Charles, as well as your criticism of Pascal seems to me the very essence of Philistinism—the reduction of all human conduct and feeling to an uniform dead level of common-place. Take away minds animated by efforts and cravings like Pascal's, and what is to become of poor humanity? Why every great virtue and every noble character exists essentially in extremes, and regards the mean with the disdain which is even marked in the popular acceptance of the English word. What would become of the self-devotion to truth and progress which has distinguished some of the greatest names in history? What would become

of the piety of the Borromœi or of St. Theresa? what of the numberless deeds of heroism of soldiers and martyrs? what of the 'enthusiasm of humanity' of so many philanthropists, if there was no higher altitude for human effort than the ordinary level pathway which the majority are content to tread? Suppose every one were frightened by the epithet of 'eccentric,' the human race would hardly have had a noble life or disinterested action to boast of. We are all naturally in-centric enough, goodness knows! It is the excentricity, the tendency to extremes, that, furnishes the 'salt of the earth.' As to the mediocrity called 'golden,' I cannot imagine how such a 'derangement of epitaphs' ever came into use. Mediocrity, the most common (the adjective *mediocre*, as in the case of *mean*, shows that the virtue is not highly prized by those who adhere to it most), and gold, the rarest commodity in the universe, unless it be that the former has in these days a tendency to inhere in those with whom the latter is most abundant. As a true expression of its value, mediocrity should be labelled 'leaden' or 'iron,' the first from the natural heaviness which makes an upward effort impossible, the second from the hardness which refuses to be impressed by nobility or unselfishness. What I most admire in Pascal is this very tendency to extremes. He searches for truth as if he were determined to wrest it from an unwilling universe. He is pious with the self-abandoning spirit of a mediæval saint. He is charitable and loving as if those virtues were the sole ingredients in his nature. In brief, he disdains commonplace. Like Shelley's skylark, he is a thorough 'scorner of the ground.' No mediocre character, or man who adhered to the mean, would have turned out of his sick couch, and vacated his own house, rather than disturb a poor child suffering from small-pox. With regard to the universe not suggesting extremes, as I think you said, the very reverse of that proposition seems to me the fact. All the extreme ideas we are possessed of are derived from the universe. Our notions *e.g.* of infinite, the absolute, etc., are all suggested by properties of the world without us. Nature indeed knows nothing of the mean, if by that be meant a degree of perfection, utility or completeness of design short of the very highest, and I suspect the conflict in Pascal's soul was

caused by the discordance between the extremes of goodness, truth, beauty he saw on every side of him, and the conviction, notwithstanding all his efforts, of his own inability to attain their full position.

TREVOR. Your last assertion, Miss Leycester, is, I am convinced, unfounded. Pascal's extremes were the idealizations of his own fervid imagination. He had no notion of searching Nature to find them. Nature he quite despised as a teacher. If he had been consistent he might have attributed its creation to a Demiurge.

HARRINGTON. An old lawyer, as you know, Florence, turns an instinctively apathetic ear to rhetorical or impassioned language. . . . I am quite as ready as you can be to admit the merit and utility of all such noble examples of and incitements to self-denial. Still, our question is the relation of the world and of religion to human powers of thought and feeling. I maintain that Pascal's extremes misrepresent that relation. They postulate, and would only be satisfied with, a world and a humanity altogether different from those of our experience. You rightly assigned the purport of those great names and heroic actions by calling them the salt of the world—no doubt they are so, but that fact does not establish salt or any other condiment taken by itself as a common or nutritive article of diet; and however much we regret the fact, and lament the operation of laws which seem to put a premium on human imperfection, it is nevertheless quite certain that a society in which every man vacated his own house in order to give it up to a homeless family would be quite impossible to live in, and such acts of devotion to the welfare of others diffuse far greater evils than those they are intended to palliate. Utopias of all kinds are pleasing objects of contemplation. They only lack, according to my experience, one indispensable pre-requisite—that of being habitable by ordinary men and women. You may remember that the imperfection which you rejoiced in our first conversation to find in great characters, really belongs to the race; and perhaps it is as well it should be so, for we can without difficulty conceive an universe and its laws, as well as an individual, which would be relatively to us as now constituted . . .

‘ too wise and good
For human nature’s daily food.’

This possibility is, in fact, what I meant by the universe suggesting to us—the mean. I say that it does so, not so much in itself, though here also the same truth holds good to a great extent, as in relation to human powers and uses. The very terms you mention as showing that we derive extreme notions from the universe, appear to me to establish the opposite conclusion; they are negative terms, mere accepted formulas of man’s inability to conceive qualities so far beyond the horizon of his own powers. There is nothing in the universe, nor in the laws which govern mankind, that compels us to achieve absolute perfection, nothing that indicates omniscience or omnipotence as the earthly destiny of our race. Man can only acquire limited wisdom; he can only attain limited goodness or prudence; he can only enjoy limited happiness, or health, or riches, or life. He has not a single faculty the ordinary moderate bounds of which he is able to exceed; and the undue growth of any one power is inevitably attended with a proportional circumscription and stunting of the rest. In short, we cannot, any more than Kant’s dove, transcend the atmosphere in which we float, *i.e.* the medium of limitation and imperfection by which we are surrounded. We may, and ought, of course, to use it, as Pascal did, as the means of resistance by which we rise still higher and higher, just as the air resists the impact of each wing-stroke of the soaring bird; but to complain, as Pascal does, of the circumscription of every effort by the bounds of the atmosphere which in reality sustains it, is not only useless and foolish, but is to ignore our rightful position, and to impugn the Creator’s wisdom.

MISS LEYCESTER. Thanks for your suggestive simile. What poor Pascal did, and what I must admire him for doing, was testing the power of wings and lungs so far as he could possibly soar. He only complained, as so many more noble spirits have done, that the tenuity of the atmosphere, and his limited powers, did not permit a higher ascent. As it was, his mounting aspirations far o’ertopped the upward flight of Kant’s dove, or any other earth-born bird. As Shakespere says:—

‘ . . . ’Tis but a base ignoble mind
That mounts no higher than a bird can soar.’

ARUNDEL. There are so many points of interest in Pascal’s wonderful character that one hardly knows which to select first. One that struck me forcibly was the fact that he succeeded in pushing the extreme tenet of human corruption to a *reductio ad absurdum*. If all man’s faculties were entirely wrecked by the Fall, it is clear that mistrust and skepticism are not accidents or aberrations, but essential features in his lot. Thus Augustine and Calvin are, as indeed we have already proved, the best allies not only of moral helplessness but of intellectual skepticism as well.

TREVOR. True. Pascal adopts the doctrine as an explanation of what he regarded as the astounding dissonance in human nature. Still with his keen insight to every inconsistency, even when it was necessary to support his argument, he points out the injustice of the dogma in its ordinary presentation. ‘What,’ he asks, ‘can be more contrary to the rules of our miserable justice than to punish eternally an infant incapable of volition for a fault in which it seems to have so little share, that it was committed 6,000 years before it came into being. And yet,’ he adds, ‘without that mystery, the most incomprehensible of all, we are incomprehensible to ourselves.’¹

HARRINGTON. It would be absurd to criticise the eclecticism which is in reality the creed of every genuine thinker, else we might ask why Pascal, who makes Jesus Christ the centre of all his thoughts and aspirations, here lays such stress on a doctrine which is not prominent in his teachings, even if it occurs in them at all.

TREVOR. Jesus Christ was to Pascal not only the moral Teacher, the Redeemer of men, the founder of the Christian Church—a closer and more intimate personal connexion arose from the assurance of his fellowship in Christ’s sufferings. Christ was the Divine sufferer whose divinity had hallowed human pain—the great model of patient endurance—He who carried self-abnegation to its sublimest point. It was thus the

¹ *Pens.*, Havet, i. 115.

Christ of Calvary, rather than the Preacher on the Mount, before whom Pascal bowed his troubled head and his frail body. Indeed, the ascetic aspects of Christianity overshadow and obscure its ethical or doctrinal teaching in his *Thoughts*. And the reason is clear; for though Pascal could find suffering in the life, and still more in the death of Christ, he could not discover in His words that direct and dogmatic assertion of the utter frailty and misery of man which was so congenial to his own somewhat morbid sympathies. Here, however, St. Paul came to his help with his scheme of the Fall and Redemption; and Pascal, influenced by Jansenism, accepted those doctrines as the chief articles of his creed. I may also observe that there is a close community of thought and sympathy between St. Paul and Pascal which has never been sufficiently noticed. The parallelism extends even to physical organization. I do not know how far it would be lawful to make the bodily infirmities which were so bitterly bemoaned by the great Apostle, *e.g.* the continual 'thorn in the flesh,' a cause (humanly speaking) of the particular stress which he places on the Fall, but there is no doubt that in Pascal's case his own physical weakness constituted a strong presumption and ever-present proof of that doctrine in its most extreme acceptation.

HARRINGTON. You have just given us an example of analogous reasoning capable of very large extension, *i.e.*, to what extent are personal beliefs affected by physical or mental organization. In the matter *e.g.* under discussion you have observed that both St. Paul and Pascal, being confessedly valetudinarians, emphasize the fall of man and the misery of the race. How far would the same rule hold good with other teachers and schools of thought who have laid great stress on the same doctrine? Mr. Galton, if you remember, in his *Hereditary Genius*, notices the weakly constitutions of Evangelical clergymen, who are more prone than any other class of divines to exaggerate the doctrine of the Fall and its consequences, and I must say that I have myself known cases in which the Invalidism of the Individual seemed to have been transferred to the race. Assuming then a correlation between types of men and those of doctrines, which of the two is the prepotent influence?

TREVOR. Neither, or rather, both. The influence is no doubt mutual. The creed helps to mould a man's intellectual, and thereby indirectly affects his physical, organization; on the other hand organization, hereditary tendencies, etc., lay hold of and assimilate those doctrines which are most congenial. In the long run the mutual interaction of those influences would, I suspect, be found nearly equal.

ARUNDEL. I can quite understand how long-continued disease, especially of a nervous kind, should almost unconsciously intensify the doctrine of the Fall and its consequences. But that the doctrine was originated in the case of St. Paul by a consciousness of his infirmities seems to me utterly improbable. The doctrine is surely the product, in ultimate analysis, of the sense of want, shortcoming and imperfection, which is common to most thoughtful men of every school. It indicates the contention between knowledge and practice, the strife between duty and inclination, the consciousness of aims we cannot achieve, of aspirations we cannot realize—in a word it marks the feeling nearest to every finite being—that of his own limitation and finite-ness. No doubt Pascal exaggerates the feeling so enormously as to make his divided existence a tacit reproach to God's goodness. A cripple may complain that he cannot use his limbs in walking, but it would be very absurd if he should suppose himself hardly used because he is unable to fly.

Nor does it seem to me that a large induction of thinkers of every race, age and creed, would at all tend to favour an inseparable connexion between a weak or sickly organism and an exaggerated view of human misery. What are we to say *e.g.* of the 300,000,000 Buddhists who push asceticism and disdain of existence to its extremest limit? Are they all invalids? Or take the Skeptics. Out of our muster-roll of vehement impugnors of Reason, and every other human faculty which is assumed to have certitude for its object, we have only a single invalid—Pascal himself, whose weakness was clearly hereditary. Some of the most determined advocates of the doctrine were men of robust physical and mental health. St. Augustine and Calvin for instance. Even in the Port Royal, St. Cyran and Jansen, with most of their disciples, attained a

fair old age. The connexion would be truer which would make the earnestness of the belief proportionate to the depth of spiritual feeling, the introspective power of its holder Of course I am far from denying that in Pascal's own case his view of humanity may not have been distorted by his own wretched health. All I object to is the attempt to base a generalization upon insufficient data.

HARRINGTON. It would be extremely difficult to deny the connexion between religious views and bodily health and organization in Pascal's case, because it seems so clearly attested by his autopsy, and the proof is confirmed by his life, and the notable fact that his worldliness coincides with his better health in its origin, growth, duration and decay. I would not say of him, what we hear of similar cases, that he was a saint because heaven denied him the power to be a sinner; but the contrast between the mystic devotion of his earlier and later life, and the intervening period of earthly passion that divides them, is very striking. Read on the one hand the *Discourse on the Passion of Love* of his Parisian life, and on the other the *Mystery of Jesus*, of his cloistered existence, and you will see the distinction between the healthy and the sickly Pascal.¹ . . . I confess I fail to see any adequate reason why attempts to account for intellectual aberration by pathological causes should be viewed with so much jealousy. Since M. Lelut's book has appeared, every writer on the subject thinks it necessary to protest against the notion that Pascal was a mere visionary or monomaniac, or that he was weak enough to believe in a hallucination; as if some of the most eminent thinkers that ever lived had not suffered from affections of a similar nature.

TREVOR. That, I think, is easily accounted for. It may be ascribed to two causes, one natural and perpetual, the other accidental and temporary. As to the first, it is surely both natural and pardonable that men who have filled the world

¹ Pascal fully recognized the dangerous influence of bodily health on his spiritual life. To those who asked the reason of the indomitable patience with which he endured his suffering, as well as the dread he evinced of being cured, he replied, 'C'est que je connais les dangers de la santé, et les avantages de la maladie.' His morbid generalization from his own state was 'La maladie est l'état naturel des Chrétiens.'—*Vie de Madame Perier*.

with the truth and beauty of their conceptions or the unselfish greatness of their lives, should be supposed to be free from infirmities the most deplorable from which any reasoning being can suffer. If ever sentiment is justifiable in literature it is in the affectionate reverence and awed regard with which the failings of such men as Pascal should be viewed. We have already agreed that both truth and common humanity should be respected by the recognition of such blemishes, but this is quite compatible with an unreserved and even enhanced veneration for the men themselves. Ste Beuve, who was so indignant with M. Lelut for daring to hint the possibility of cerebral disorder in Pascal's case, was compelled some years after to acknowledge the existence of an undoubted hallucination in the case of Joan of Arc, though he does so with a tender, thoughtful grace peculiar to himself, and with the dread of employing 'the smallest word which could provoke laughter.'¹ Such literary piety must always exist and be influential in the world, and its influence is on the whole ennobling and healthy, notwithstanding its liability to degenerate sometimes into a maudlin and servile hero-worship. But (2) another cause has contributed to foster the unwillingness to connect mental disease with the hallowed name of Pascal; and that is ignorance. Researches into psychology and cerebral pathology since Pascal's time have clearly proved that mental diseases springing from organic causes are exceedingly various both in origin and operation; and that there is in reality a very small line of demarcation between undoubted genius and some degree of insanity. . . . I should not like to go so far as another French doctor,² who fully shares and confirms M. Lelut's opinion respecting Pascal, that 'genius is merely a form of madness.'

ARUNDEL. A dictum which, if true, would be the apotheosis of stupidity and commonplace. Henceforth we should be

¹ *Causeries du Lundi*, ii. p. 401. Compare Lelut, *Du Démon de Socrate*, ed. ii. p. 54, etc.

² Moreau (de Tours) in his *Psychologie Morbide*, Paris 1859. Apropos of this doctrine Professor Dairemberg has well remarked, 'Heureusement notre confrère ne parvient ni à indiquer la lésion organique qui donne le génie, ni à montrer le génie chez les fous.'—*La Médecine, Histoire et Doctrines*, p. 392.

compelled to modify an old proverb, and to pronounce as the greatest desideratum in human life, 'Mens insana in corpore insano.' I suppose the converse of the proposition would hardly be admitted, that 'Madness is merely a form of genius.'

HARRINGTON. There is one practical purpose which such a theory might be made to subserve. Insanity is often, so I have heard, only the extreme and exaggeration of sane conditions, just as certain physical diseases are the morbid excess of functional activity, or as vice is the excess of a virtue, and heresy the exaggeration of some truth. In either case, repress or make allowance for the exaggeration, and the normal condition will be thereby attained. But this we are in literature very reluctant to do. We generally accept all an author's deliverances *en bloc* without the least attempt at distinguishing his perversities and extravagances from his ordinary moods. The expediency of 'appealing from Philip drunk to Philip sober,' might here be employed with advantage whenever the 'sobriety' and 'drunkenness' are clearly attested as distinct states. Similarly we might appeal from Pascal nervous and dispirited to Pascal in better moods, or we might by a similar process moderate and allow for unusual excesses in Montaigne's vanity or cynicism. Every great mind is a book with two columns, often more, and is to be read with alternate glances at each side of the page. Even if the divergencies are not created by accidental causes as in Pascal's case, they are at least induced by natural development.

ARUNDEL. But who is to decide on the extravagance on the one hand, and the normal condition on the other?

HARRINGTON. In some cases no doubt this would be difficult, although if characters were quite homogeneous the attempt would be needless. In other cases it would be easy. Take Pascal for instance. Some of the *Thoughts* seem so clearly dictated by severe bodily pain and consequent nervous depression that in my opinion their diseased origin is unmistakable.

MISS LEYCESTER. A copy of the *Thoughts* marginally annotated in the way you suggest would be interesting if we could only rely upon it. Opposite one Thought I suppose you would write 'severe headache'; opposite another 'mental prostration,' and so on; but the association would be entirely guess-

work. Your plan, too, would have the further advantage of authorizing every pigmy critic to approach the giants of the world with his own little measuring tape, and pronouncing one thought abnormal, another extravagant, for no other reason than that they were far above the level of his mannikin comprehension.

TREVOR. Why, as to that, men, whether pigmies or of a somewhat larger growth, will criticise and estimate giants just as children are irresistibly attracted by huge objects; and it is both impossible and unadvisable to attempt to restrain them. I see a still graver objection to Harrington's proposal, *i.e.* it would tend to split up the individuality of a complex character into two or more distinct personages. Men who grow, and such *ex vi termini*, great men invariably are, must pass through different statures, and the current of a flowing river will not be the same at any two stages of its course. Still the man is one, and the river is one, and we can do no more than allow for clearly attested eccentricities when they quite overtop every element in the character, whether considered by itself or regarded as a composite whole. With the application of your rule to Pascal's *Thoughts*, I am inclined to agree. There are some of them which bear indelibly the mark of physical disease; and if we had the original MS. before us we might, I think, be able with considerable probability to select and annotate a still greater number.

ARUNDEL. One of the most convincing proofs of Pascal's skepticism must always be his abuse of human reason. It is this display of fanaticism—amounting almost to a hatred of philosophy—that has excited Cousin's ire, as I think it would that of most other thinkers who believe in Thought. This is also the prime characteristic of the mystic—all external light, even the sun at noon-day, must yield to the divine brilliancy of spirit-light. This aspect of Pascal's character is well expressed in Frederick Schlegel's 'Geistes-Licht.' (Miss Leycester will, I have no doubt, pardon my bad German pronunciation.)

'Geistlich wird umsonst genannt
Wer nicht Geistes Licht erkannt;
Wissen ist des Glauben's Stern,
Andacht alles Wissen's Kern.

Lehr und lerne Wissenschaft
 Fehlt dir des Gefühles Kraft,
 Und des Herzen's frommer Sinn
 Fält es bald zum Staube hin.' ¹

But though I agree with the sentiment of the last four lines, it appears to me that 'Geistes-Licht'—unless reason supply the wick—the solid element of the illumination—is mere owl's-light.

MISS LEYCESTER. You may be right from the standpoint of reason; but if mystics like Pascal are impatient of human powers or earthly knowledge, we need not forget that scientists are equally distrustful of intuition or devout feeling. What can better characterize this deficiency—this heartlessness some would call it—of most of our scientific teachers, both here and in Germany, than the four last lines of the 'Geistes-Licht,'—

'Science only teach and learn;
 Feelings' power you then will spurn,
 And the heart's warm instinct must
 Fall and crumble soon to dust.'

I don't mean to say that Pascal's belief in 'devotion being the kernel of all knowledge' is encouraging on all points—it did not save him from very degrading superstitions. Still no science can eventually succeed which tramples on the emotional instincts of humanity.

MRS. HARRINGTON. But our scientists are surely beginning to recognize that. Perhaps some of them might not be unwilling to take 'Andacht alles Wissens Kern' as their motto, provided they were allowed to explain the 'Andacht' after their own manner. For, having expelled the Deity from the universe, they profess to administer to our sentimental needs by such satisfactory compensation as 'cosmic emotion.' I wonder, by the way, what Pascal would have thought of this as an object of feeling and devotion—a substitute for the love of God.

ARUNDEL. Thought of it? Why he would have abjured, detested and anathematized it with all the impassioned vehemence of his nature. To him it would have been insult added

¹ Schlegel, *Sämmt. Werke*, ix. p. 81.

to injury—a stone proffered for bread, a serpent instead of a fish. His repudiation of all Nature's lessons and influences is not the least strongly-marked feature of his mind. 'Cosmic emotion,' we may imagine him saying; 'what relation has such a sentiment to my own human needs and cravings. I ask for a personal God; you offer me an impersonal universe. I desire spirit; you give me matter. I have anxieties to be soothed, doubts to be allayed, passions to be subdued, affections to be met and reciprocated, and you tender me infinite processes and inexorable laws. I am conscious of misery and disorder; you bring to my relief a realm of unvarying order. I feel weakness, not physical only but spiritual; you talk to me of material forces. I crave a sympathetic friend; you point to a Kosmos. I say, 'I am ill, dying; take me to a hospital.' You answer, 'Never mind that; come and see this lovely picture-gallery.' I want—it is the concentration of all the cravings of my nature—a God; and you recommend me a soulless, lifeless, passionless giant.

HARRINGTON. Very true, Arundel, from the Pascal point of view; which, however, need not bind us. He would have disdained 'cosmic emotion' as being part of Natural Religion; we should probably maintain that there is much to be said both for one and the other. . . . With all our skeptic's undoubted excellencies, there is one point in respect of which he falls considerably beneath some of his predecessors on our list, *e.g.* Charron and Le Vayer. I mean his less firm grip of moral principles, as inherent mainsprings of right and duty. Ste Beuve said Pascal was 'surtout moral'; I should say he was 'surtout theologique.' Of course we must bear the *Provincials* in mind; but his argument with the Jesuits is professedly based on theological and Protestant considerations. In the whole of the *Provincials* he never once rises to the 'ethical sublime' of Charron. As a Protestant he maintains that the sum of morality consists of concupiscence and grace—the sin and its remedy. His Pyrrhonism is shown by his application of the geographical argument to morality, in defining it as an unregulated sentiment,¹ and in affirming its dependence on a future life; while in the betting argument he seems to make

¹ *Pens.*, Hav., i. 106.

it a question of mere expediency—a kind of honesty-is-the-best-policy doctrine. I wonder, by the way, whether Paley's well-known argument in his *Moral Philosophy* was suggested by Pascal?

TREVOR. Special suggestion is unnecessary when you have such a large body of general conviction. Future rewards and punishments have been continually put forward, not as a natural outcome of, but as a specific motive for, moral conduct. But there seems some little difference between the position of Pascal and that of Paley. Pascal says in the argument you have referred to: You had better believe, for if things should turn out as Christianity declares, you will gain everything; on the other hand, should all be false, you will lose nothing! Bayle well compares a similar argument of Arnobius,¹ which is, 'Of two results equally uncertain it is better to choose that which gives us hope than that which does not.' Of course either is a direct appeal to human selfishness—it concentrates our attention not on the inherent nobility, worth or excellence of the moral act, but on an extraneous result it is declared to possess. Paley's position is still more directly selfish. Do justly, deal truly, because, so doing, you will obey a God who can punish disobedience, and you will have eternal happiness as a reward.

MISS LEYCESTER. I think we must place Pascal's argumentation on this and other points to the credit of the narrow creed of Jansenism. Once assume Favouritism as a Divine attribute, of which irresistible grace is the human expression, and you must find some method of inducing men who neither believe the former nor have experienced the latter to lead a religious and moral life. For myself, the fact of Pascal's having tried to find, outside of his personal convictions, some method of leading man to God, is to me a strong proof of the real catholicity and charity of his feelings. Calvin would never have devised a method of making men do right apart from his dogma of irresistible grace. That Pascal's own conduct was largely influenced by considerations of future rewards is what I could never bring myself to believe. The man was really better and broader than his creed. His charity, I am

¹ *Dict.*, Art. 'Pascal,' Note (I.).

convinced, was dictated solely by the desire to benefit others, and a wish to follow humbly in the steps of his Divine Master ; and his heroic virtue and patience proceeded from no other motive than the sublimest conviction of duty. He would have acted, I feel sure, in the same way had he been either ignorant of, or a confirmed disbeliever in, a future existence.

MRS. HARRINGTON. I cannot at all agree with you, Florence, in regretting, as you appear to do, Pascal's Jansenism. That Pascal should have been contemporaneous with that particular phase of Romanism, short-lived as it was, is to me a very admirable and striking coincidence. It was a faith that embodied and expressed all the peculiarities in his character. He was by nature and physical constitution adapted for the cloister. His philosophy and religion were both cloistral ; so were his views on Nature and Humanity. A home, in the full sense of the word, he could hardly have found in a Romanist convent ; for though he would willingly and of his own accord adopt the severest asceticism, he could have ill brooked the external authority of ecclesiastical rule, any more than he could have tolerated its immorality. Pascal was really a Protestant monk.

MRS. ARUNDEL. But if Jansenism contained the impulse which first impelled Pascal in the path of skepticism, why should not his companions, Nicole and Arnauld, have shared his development ? I suppose they believed the doctrine of original sin as fully as he did.

ARUNDEL. The same question has been asked more than once. The answer Trevor suggested is, in effect, that of Cousin.¹ They were prevented by their philosophical creed and their personal character. The first, Cartesian rationalism, protested against extreme or Pyrrhonic skepticism as destructive of all modes of distinguishing truth from error. As to the second, they were men of moderation and caution, who fully discerned the mischiefs which would arise from unlimited skepticism in the sense of negation. How curiously, by the way, the relative positions of Pascal and his friends, as he conceived it, have been inverted by posterity. Pascal regarded his brother Port-Royalists, on account of their ad-

¹ *Études*, p. 83.

herence to Descartes and their stress on Natural Religion, as dangerous free-thinkers, who compelled Religion to do homage to Philosophy, while he made Religion supreme, and humbled Reason and every other human faculty before her. Now, Arnauld and Nicole are the cautious rather narrow sectaries, who best understood the real welfare of Christianity; while Pascal is the Pyrrhonist, whose opinions are absolutely fatal both to religion and morality.

HARRINGTON. Pascal is one of five French skeptics who are nearly all contemporaries. It will help us to distinguish them if we remember that pursuing the same methods they all arrived at different results. Thus Charron employed skepticism as a method to inculcate independent morality. Descartes employed it, also, as a method to form a basis for philosophical and scientific construction. Le Vayer employed Pyrrhonism to arrive at Ataraxia. Huet adopted the same philosophy to form a basis for ecclesiastical dogma. Pascal used it as a motive and reason for supernatural grace.

MISS LEYCESTER. Why not call the end, in Pascal's case, mysticism, the merging of the individual, with his scruples and doubts, in the fulness and certainty of the Infinite Being? I think, indeed, that ought to be the last thought of our discussion, as it formed the last paragraph of Dr. Trevor's paper. Notwithstanding his skepticism, Pascal's final stage is one of pure, ecstatic, ineffable exaltation. We leave our Christian pilgrim, to refer to Bunyan's immortal allegory, not in 'Doubting Castle,' but enjoying the conviction and rapture of the 'Land of Beulah.'¹

* * * * *

¹ 'In this country the sun shineth night and day; wherefore it was beyond the valley of the shadow of death, and also out of the reach of Giant Despair! neither could they, from this place, as much as see *Doubting Castle*.—*Pilgrim's Progress*, part i.

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— *Discours Chrétien d'Immortalité de l'Âme*: 711 (n1).

— *Du Peu de Certitude en l'Histoire*: 685 (n2), 686 (nn1-3), 687 (n1).

— *Le Prose Chagrin*: 682 (n4), 710 (n3).

— *Observations sur la Composition de Livres*: 654 (n), 666 (n3).

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— *Dialogues par Oratius Tubero*, 2 vols. 12mo Frankfort (Trévoux) 1716: 601 (n2), 649 (n), 660 (nn1-2), 661 (n1), 671 (n), 673 (n), 674 (nn1-2),

676 (nn1-3), 677 (n1), 678 (n2), 679 (nn1-3), 680 (nn1-2), 682 (nn2-3,6), 683 (nn1-4), 684 (nn1,3-4), 690 (nn1-2), 708 (n), 710 (n2), 711 (n1), 712 (n1).

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— *Hexaméron Rustique*: 12mo Paris (Liscux) 187-: 649 (n), 659 (n1), 682 (n4), 713 (n1).

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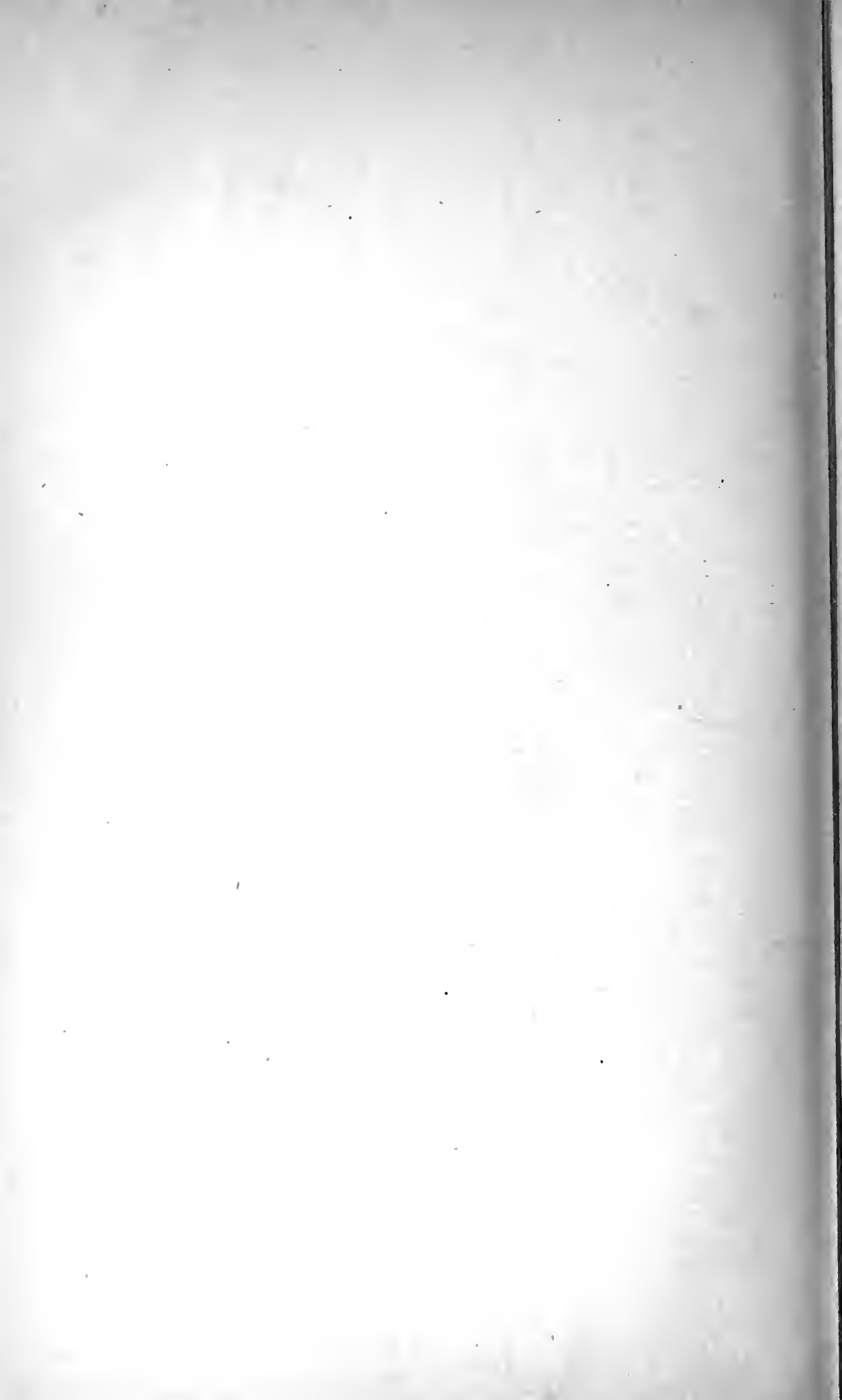
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